

**The Shadow of the Process of the Universe:
A Whiteheadian Approach toward Process Praxis Theodicy**

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by
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ABSTRACT

THE SHADOW OF THE PROCESS OF THE UNIVERSE: A WHITEHEADIAN APPROACH TOWARD PROCESS PRAXIS THEODICY

By

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This dissertation presents a process praxis theodicy, which is an attempt to combine Alfred North Whitehead's process theodicy and the understanding of suffering in the liberation movement. Jincheol O argues that Whitehead has a concern for praxis for the suffering world as well as philosophical concerns for theodicy. The thesis of this work is that logical and existential process theodicies go further than the work of David Ray Griffin, Burton Z. Cooper, and Tyrone Inbody by seeking the balance of theory and praxis in order to confront massive injustice and inequality in the world.

Griffin's fundamental interest in theodicy is to propose a coherent logical process theodicy. On the other hand, Cooper and Inbody have a strong personal, existential tendency because their fundamental concern is to create a valuable meaning in the middle of affliction. However, these three process thinkers focus little or not at all on the importance of liberating people from conditions producing massive suffering. Because of

their focus on logical or individual suffering, they are weak in praxis for world suffering.

According to Whitehead, thought cannot be separated from the experience of feeling. Therefore, the theory of thought should be rooted in concrete experiences. In the relationship between praxis and theory, Whitehead's idea of feeling bestows the priority of praxis of liberation before philosophical theory. In order to establish a Whiteheadian process praxis theodicy, Jincheol claims that one should acknowledge the priority of praxis over the theoretical foundation in spite of indispensable relationship between praxis and theory.

What Jincheol calls "the praxis process theodicy" aims at the communal praxis for wholeness. It proposes a nondualistic, holistic, relational vision of the liberation of the world without defying the priority of praxis to theory, although there is an indispensable relationship between the two. Because one of the fundamental issues of liberation theology and process theology is to bring about social justice, both theologies can be complementary to each other. This means that liberation theology can support the process theologians who desire to more actively participate in social justice issues, and process theology can assist the liberation theologians by giving strength to the theoretical foundations of the liberation movement.

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Preface

The term theodicy, created by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, is a compound of the Greek words for God (θεός) and justice (δίκη).¹ The meaning of theodicy is the justification of God's sovereignty and benevolence in the face of moral and natural evil. The problem of theodicy has traditionally been posed in the form of an impasse: If God is all-powerful and all-loving, God can and must abolish evil, and evil exists. Therefore, God cannot be all-powerful or all-loving, or God simply does not exist. The problem of theodicy, so to speak, is represented by the difficulty of unifying three independent propositions: God is omnipotent; God is benevolent; and evil exists. The essential issue of the logical problem of theodicy is whether there is any contradiction among these three propositions.

Biblical texts present several responses to the problem of the evil and suffering such as punishment, trial, mystery, or eschatological compensation. These answers partially helped out suffering people in various ways. However, biblical explanations of human suffering are not fully examined in a philosophical sense because biblical scriptures primarily do not seek to establish a coherent logical theodicy.² They mainly focus on existential and practical answers to the suffering, which

¹. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil*, ed. Austin Farrer, trans. E. M. Huggard (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1997), 389.

². Barry L. Whitney. *Theodicy: An Annotated Bibliography on the Problem of Evil, 1960-1991* (New York: Garland, 1998), 255.

their contemporary societies confronted. On the other hand, ancient and modern traditional theists have primarily attempted to defend the omnipotent power and the infinite love of God regardless of suffering in the world. Based on traditional biblical understandings of evil and suffering, traditional theists' solutions to the problem of theodicy offered some existential or practical answers, but could not propose a solid theoretical foundation against atheism. As Alfred North Whitehead states, all the traditional dogmatic statements became a shipwreck in the fact of the problem of evil.³

The logical problem of theodicy takes three different paths: one is to defend the idea that there is no internal contradiction among the three propositions, the other is to affirm a logical contradiction in the theistic approach, and another is to revise the meaning of one of the three propositions in order to explain the problem of evil. In other words, in the discussion of the logical problem of evil, one encounters three different types of approach: the traditional Christian approach, the atheistic approach, and what I call the altered approach. The traditional Christian theodicy approach, which is mainly represented by Alvin C. Plantinga and Richard Swinburne, maintains the idea that there is no logical inconsistency among the three propositions.⁴ In

3. Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1996), 77.

4. See, Alvin C. Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, Reprint. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1977); Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1986.

contrast, the atheistic approach, which is forcefully attempted by John Leslie Mackie and Richard Rorty, declares that there is no such omnipotent God because it is not logically consistent in maintaining the three propositions at the same time.⁵ Mackie states, "There is a fundamental difficulty in the notion of an omnipotent God creating men with free will, for if men's wills are really free this must mean that even God cannot control them, that is, that God is no longer omnipotent."⁶ The altered approach has a twofold application. In a broad sense, it includes all attempts to revise the meaning of one of the propositions. In a narrower sense, it is an attempt to revise the meaning of divine power, which is the most controversial issue in the discussion of the logical problem of theodicy.

Process scholars have developed a comprehensive understanding of the problem of evil by rediscovering the meaning of divine power in relation to the creativity of the actual entity. Process theodicy is an attempt to solve the problem of suffering and evil in the world by way of the perspective of process philosophy, which was originated by Whitehead and was well developed by Charles Hartshorne. Since the main theme of these two philosophers was a coherent reconstruction

⁵. See John Leslie Mackie. "Evil and Omnipotence," in *The Problem of Evil*, ed. Marilyn McCord Adams and Robert Merrihew Adams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 25-37; Richard Rorty. "Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality," in *On Human Rights* ed. Stephen Shute and Susan Hurley (New York: BasicBooks), 1993.

⁶. John L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," 34.

of metaphysics, they did not mainly attempt to explain the so-called problem of evil. However, process metaphysics bestows luminous insights toward a new understanding of divine power, the freedom of the actual entity, and the understanding of moral evil and natural evil in the universe. John B. Cobb, who is one of the distinguished successors of Whitehead and Hartshorne, has dealt somewhat with the issue of the problem of evil,⁷ but his main project is to reconstruct a new natural theology based on the philosophy of Whitehead and Hartshorne.

David Ray Griffin, who is a successor of these process thinkers, presents an extensive version of process theodicy redeveloping the logical problem of evil and constructing a coherent theodicy, which resolves the difficult theodicy problems within traditional theism. He has developed and sharpened process theodicy not only through extensive debates with traditional theists and atheist, but also through creative theological exchange with other process thinkers. Griffin argues that traditional theism did not properly present a proper response to the atheistic arguments as far as the theodicy problem is concerned. In order to have a logical consistency in the theodicy problem, Griffin argues that one should reevaluate the meaning of divine power. Although many traditional theists accuse process theologians of abandoning belief in the omnipotent God, Griffin insists

7. See John B. Cobb Jr. "Evil and the Power of God," Chap. 4 in *God and the World* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 87-102.

that process thought does not abandon God's omnipotence, but the meaning of omnipotence should be revised in order to explain the problem of evil with sincerity. In process thought, God is omnipotent in the sense that God has the supreme power in the universe without defying the creativity of the actual entity, and in the sense that God reveals perfect benevolence to the actual entity. Thus, the central tasks of process theodicy are to show the relationship between God's power and the freedom of the actual entity, and God's absolute benevolence in the situation of evil and suffering.

Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki has also developed a slightly different process approach to the problem of evil and suffering.⁸ Whereas Griffin's theodicy is primarily focused on the logical problem of evil, Suchocki's eschatology is focused on the existential problem of evil, the redemption of creaturely suffering and evil, and the justice of the whole world. Tyron Inbody and Burton Cooper have also presented slightly revised versions of process theodicy based on existential and pastoral theodicy. Inbody's Trinitarian process theodicy and Cooper's Christocentric theodicy are attempts to relate process theodicy with traditional theodicy.

My interest in process theodicy is to examine whether various process theodicies are fully capable of dealing with the problem of evil and suffering in the world, especially that created by human injustice

⁸. See Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, *The End of Evil*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988).

and inequality. According to process thought, theory cannot be separated from the praxis of the concrete situation. Also, the life of a human being is always interconnected to the life of the whole universe. Since the relational worldview of process thought can be applied to the relationship between theory and praxis and the relationship between personal identity and the society, I will develop a praxis process theodicy, which emphasizes the indispensable relationship between praxis and theory for the suffering in the world.

The thesis of my dissertation is that a logical and existential process theodicy should go further than the work of Griffin, Cooper, and Inbody by seeking the balance of theory and praxis in order to confront massive injustice and inequality in the world. Since formal process theodicies primarily focus on theory and individual aspects of suffering, I will emphasize the underestimated aspects of process theodicy, namely, the praxis and social dimension of suffering. What I call the process praxis theodicy proposes nondualistic, holistic, relational vision of the liberation of the world without defying the priority of praxis to theory, although there is an indispensable relationship between the two.

My methodology is to combine biblical, Whiteheadian, and liberation theology. I will examine these three areas in light of the problem of evil and suffering, and will develop a praxis process theodicy. In relation to process theodicy, I will search for praxis and social aspects in Whitehead's corpus and will critically examine the

aforementioned former process theodicies of Griffin, Inbody, and Cooper.

Since I focus on the process thoughts of Whitehead, Griffin, Inbody, and Cooper, this dissertation is limited to these process thinkers, and it does not examine less developed process theodicies such as those implied by Hartshorne, Cobb, and Suchocki. However, in the discussion of the conversation between process theology and liberation theology, I will examine Joseph A. Bracken, Cobb, and Suchocki's responses to liberation theology. In the field of liberation theodicy, I will focus on the works of Matthew L. Lamb, Gustavo Gutierrez, and Korean Minjung theology.⁹ Therefore, this dissertation is limited to those process scholars and liberation scholars in order to focus the discussion as sharply as possible.

In relation to the biblical sources on the problem of evil in chapter I and II, I will examine Jewish and Hellenistic responses to the problem of evil in a broad sense. In Jewish understanding on evil in Chapter I, I will first outline traditional understandings on the suffering in the Hebrew Bible, especially focusing attention on the Israel's tragic experience of national collapses in 722 and 587 B.C.E. Before the exile period, the basic Jewish understanding of suffering was suffering as punishment. One can easily find this idea in the Pentateuchal sources, the

⁹. Minjung means the majority of Korean people who are oppressed by the political, economical, social, cultural and hierarchical system in Korea, and Minjung theology can be said to be a Korean liberation theology.

deuteronomic historian sources, and the writings of the early prophets. The other distinctiveness of the preexilic period is that biblical writers understand suffering as a communal matter. The suffering from sins is not just a matter of an individual but a matter of the whole community of Israel. After the exilic period, several archetypal traits on the explanation of suffering appeared. Those are the emphasis of suffering as a personal matter rather than communal punishment, appearance of the positive understanding of suffering, the lament tradition of grief and protest against Yahweh, and appeal to mystery and the apocalyptic future. Although there were no theoretical solutions in Hebrew Scriptures, biblical writers proclaimed Yahweh's love and justice overall. In the second part of the Jewish response to suffering, I will examine modern Jewish responses to the Holocaust. After reviewing four post-Holocaust responses on human suffering proposed by Zachary Braiterman, I will critically examine Richard Rubenstein's radical approach to the event of the Holocaust. I will argue that Rubenstein's God of the Holy Nothingness is self-defeated and cannot reconcile the God of Israel and the event of the Holocaust because he could not offer a coherent metaphysical foundation in relation to the problem of evils and suffering in the world.

Chapter 2 will examine diverse theodicy understandings in the early Christianity period. In comparison to traditional Jewish understandings on suffering and evil, early Christianity has broadened various understandings on the theodicy problem. On some level, early

Christianity is certainly indebted to the traditional Jewish understandings of evil and suffering. In the New Testament, for example, one can easily detect the influences of the traditional Jewish understandings of evil such as suffering as punishment, trial, mystery, or future compensation in various degrees. However, the Hebrew Bible tradition is not the only influence on the formation of theodicy in early Christianity, but it is also heavily influenced by other contemporary traditions such as Zoroastrianism and Hellenism. One of the distinctive characters in the New Testament theodicy is that writers of the New Testament newly introduced the image of the Devil, who is responsible for the presence of evil and suffering. Second, rather than a negative understanding of suffering as punishment, early Christianity emphasized the positive aspect of suffering. Heavily influenced by the conception of heroes in the Greco-Roman world, gospel writers describe suffering as an honorable opportunity for fulfilling God's will. Third, in relation to God's sovereignty and the origin of evil there were ongoing controversial debates on the *creatio ex nihilo* and *creatio ex chaos* in early Christianity. Finally, there was an eschatological vision, which presupposes God's final defeat over the Devil in the end of the world. In the eschaton, eschatological visionaries proclaimed, God would amend all injustice and would compensate all suffering of people. Along with traditional Jewish understandings of evil, these four comparatively newly developed conceptions of suffering have been

heavily influenced throughout the whole history of Christianity up to the present time.

Chapter 3 will examine Whitehead's conception of the problem of evil and suffering. Whitehead does not present an absolutely optimistic or absolutely pessimistic worldview; rather, he proposes progressive advance in the middle of the tragedies of the universe. The universe always preserves tension between good and evil. Whitehead explains this necessity of instability in the universe using terms such as "wandering," "vagueness," and "chaos." For Whitehead, the reason for the occurrence of evil is due to the metaphysical principle that is the principle of creative process in the universe. God's constant initial aims for good and the responses of actual entities with genuine freedom offer real hope for the world to be better in the midst of risks of the world to be worse. In Whitehead's metaphysical principle, all actual entities seek the aesthetic values of harmony and intensity. In the last section of chapter 3, I will propose four fundamental elements of Whitehead's theodicy: the denunciation of traditional Christian answers to the problem of evil, the revision of the traditional idea of God, the emphasis on the freedom of the actual entity, and the description of God who is compassionate and overcomes the evil.

In the following chapter, I will examine three different paths of process theodicy developed respectively by Griffin, Cooper, and Inbody. I name these different approaches as logical process theodicy, existential Christocentric process theodicy, and existential Trinitarian

process theodicy. Following my outline of these theodicies, I will examine Whitehead's and/or Hartshorne's influences on each thinker relative to process theodicy. Third, I will explore the difference and conformity among these three process thinkers. My fundamental question of these theodicies is: do the various attempts at process theodicy provide enough power to overcome current sufferings of the people who undergo massive political, economical, social, and cultural afflictions especially in the deprived countries? My answer is negative, since these process theodicies mostly focus on intellectual and personal aspects of the problem of evil. Matthew L. Lamb states, "The central problem [of theodicy] is how to bring about more just and good societies.... Private conscience or individually great persons are insufficient to counteract the social injustices intensified by the technological and bureaucratic power of modernity."¹⁰ Because of their personal and logical focus, the previous process theodicy approaches were unable to confront social injustice and inequality in the world, especially that which exists in the oppressed countries. I will conclude with the notion that what I call "a praxis process approach" is required in the voyage of process theodicy beyond the works of Griffin, Cooper, and Inbody.

Chapter 5 seeks to move in the direction of a process praxis theodicy, which emphasizes the indispensable relationship between

¹⁰. Matthew L. Lamb. "Liberation Theology and Social Justice." *Process Studies* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 112.

theory and praxis for social justice and love. Since I borrowed the term “praxis” from Latin American liberation theology, this chapter will be a conversational approach between process thought and liberation theology as they relate to the problem of evil. Here I apply liberation theology in a broad sense. I not only refer to Latin American liberation theology, but also I consider black theology, womanist theology, and Asian liberation theology, especially Korean Minjung theology.

Because one of the fundamental issues of liberation theology and process theology is to bring about social justice in the world, both theologies can be complementary to each other. This means that liberation theology can support the process theologians who desire to more actively participate in the social justice issues in throughout the world, and process theology can assist the liberation theologians by giving strength to the theoretical foundations of the liberation movement. This chapter will focus on three issues between process theology and liberation theology: the priority of praxis to theory, diverse dimensions of liberation, and the feeble foundation of the liberation movement.

This dissertation will be the first attempt to combine process theology with liberation theology in relation to the problem of evil. This effort will bestow a strong theoretical foundation for liberation theology in defense of suffering people and will demand praxis for process theology in response to the massive sufferings exerted by unauthorized power. Since there is no fully developed of an ethical theory based on

the conversation between a robust conception of Whitehead's metaphysics and the praxis of the liberation movement, this project has the potential to be a substantial contribution to the field of process philosophy and liberation theology in relation to the problem of theodicy.

Chapter 1

The Problem of Suffering and Evil in the Hebrew Scriptures and the Post-Holocaust Jewish Tradition

Outline of Theodicy in the Hebrew Scriptures

The Hebrew Scriptures maintains two major conceptions on the human suffering in relation to the sovereignty of Yahweh: Yahweh is the mastery of all things and all events in the universe, and evils and sufferings in the world are attributed to the misuses of human freedom.¹ The Hebrew Bible texts often speak of divine sovereignty and human responsibility at the same time without critical analysis. In fact, the Hebrew Bible does not present a well-organized theodicy because constructing a rational theodicy is not the primary intention of biblical writers. However, the Hebrew Bible offers various practical responses to the events of suffering. In particular, the theodicy responses of the Hebrew Bible are closely related to Israel's tragic experience of national collapses in 722 and 587 B.C.E.

The first account for the presence of suffering in the world is in the story of the Fall in Genesis 1-3, according to the Christian theology. The first three chapters of Genesis propose that the primary reason for human suffering is due to sins of Adam and Eve. Although Yahweh originally

¹. Barry L. Whitney, *Theodicy: An Annotated Bibliography on the Problem of Evil, 1960-1991* (New York: Garland, 1998), 255.

made a good world for human beings, the creation and fall story shows some existential gap between Yahweh's good creation purpose and the suffering situations of human beings. Daniel J. Simundson explains, "Adam and Eve sinned, so we are all, whether relatively good or bad, subject to pain and death."² Since the first humans did not follow Yahweh's command, pain and suffering came to the world. The answer of Adamic theodicy is that human beings are responsible for the suffering in the world. Simundson goes to explain, "God made a good world for the humans to enjoy. The human beings—the man and the woman—are the ones who must bear the responsibility for the pain and suffering of the world. This is the story of the whole human race."³ The cycle of sin and suffering that began with first humans, biblical writers explain, is continued from generation to generation.

The transmission of Adamic sin is developed through the idea of "the sins of the fathers" (Exod 34:7). Sin affects not only the immediate sinner, but also those related to the sinner. Punishment goes beyond the sinner alone. The fundamental conception here is that suffering resulting from sin is a communal issue, which can infect the whole society even through

². Daniel J. Simundson, "Suffering," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* ed. David Noel Freedman, vol. 6 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 221.

³. Simundson, "Suffering," 220.

generations.⁴ The story of Achan's sin in Joshua 7 is a typical instance of suffering as corporate. While explaining Achan's sin, Simundson states, "The sin of one can have ripple effects, bringing suffering to all the people. Suffering is caused by human sin, but it may be the sin of another, not necessarily one's own sin, that brings suffering."⁵ As Achan's sin results in the subsequent suffering of the whole nation, early biblical writers understand suffering to be corporate.

Following the Adamic tradition and the conception of the "sins of fathers," early prophets understood that evil and suffering is due to human faults and that suffering is communal rather than individual. They proclaim that the injustice and idolatry of the society would be disastrous to all Israelites. Early prophets make a connection between the sins of people and national catastrophes. In particular, they understand that the political, religious, and business leaders make the corruption of Israel.⁶ Due to the misbehaviors of public leaders, the Israelites ought to have suffering; it does not matter whether each individual is obedient or disobedient to Yahweh. Simundson states, "The Babylonians destroy all in their path, the wicked and the pious, the unjust and the obedient."⁷ For the period of

4. Simundson, "Suffering," 220.

5. Simundson, "Suffering," 220.

6. Simundson, "Suffering," 220.

7. Simundson, "Suffering," 221.

national catastrophe, there is no safe place for the righteous as well as the unrighteous.⁸

The deuteronomic historian (DH) proposes an archetypal interpretation on human suffering: Israelites sin, Yahweh punishes them by external foes, the people repent, and Yahweh restores them.⁹ The book of Judges clearly shows the deuteronomic pattern of suffering as punishment. Simundson states, "The stories of the judges in the book of Judges are set into a pattern that shows this same belief that suffering is retribution for sin."¹⁰ While prosperity is the gift for faithfulness to Yahweh, calamity is the consequence of the people's disobediences.¹¹ In the four-step paradigm of sin, punishment, repentance, and restoration, the cause of evil and suffering is essentially due to human faults. Yahweh presents the Israelites choices, and people's choices determine their fate. Suffering is a symptom that people made a wrong alternative. According to the DH, the collapse of the two kingdoms is also due to their disobediences to Yahweh. In the perspective of the DH, suffering was viewed as the

⁸. Simundson, "Suffering," 220.

⁹. James L. Crenshaw, "Theodicy," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* ed. David Noel Freedman, vol. 6 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 445.

¹⁰. Simundson, "Suffering," 220.

¹¹. Simundson, "Suffering," 220.

punishment for sin, but this evil had a role of prevention to chasing additional malevolence (Deut 19:20; Jer 36:3).¹²

In the preexilic tradition of Hebrew Scriptures, suffering as punishment is a prevailing understanding of human affliction.¹³ Suffering is mainly due to human misbehaviors against Yahweh. As I have shown, one can easily ascertain this idea in the early works of the Hebrew Scriptures such as the Pentateuchal sources, the DH sources, and the writings of early prophets. There is also strong communal awareness in relation to suffering in preexilic materials.¹⁴ Although agony is attributed to human misconduct, the innocent as well as the guilty could be victimized in the long run. However, the devastation of the exile damaged the reliability of the preexilic consensus. Simundson states, "The experience of the exile was a crucial time for reconsidering many traditional ways of seeking meaning in suffering."¹⁵ The suffering from God was too cruel and excessively prolonged. Although the Israelites are sinful, they are still more righteous than the Babylonians.¹⁶ The heavenly God should not punish his or her

¹². Duane F. Watson, "Evil," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* ed. David Noel Freedman, vol. 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 678.

¹³. Simundson, "Suffering," 221.

¹⁴. Simundson, "Suffering," 221.

¹⁵. Simundson, "Suffering," 219.

¹⁶. Simundson, "Suffering," 221.

children even by slaughtering them. In particular, the national collapse that followed right after the shock of the righteous Josiah's death made it hard to believe that Yahweh rules the world righteously.¹⁷

The later prophets defy the deuteronomic traditional understanding of evil, although they acknowledge the disobedience of Israel toward Yahweh.¹⁸ For example, Habakkuk inquires about the success of the wicked and the failure of the righteous. Crenshaw L. James explains, "He [Habakkuk] asked the most difficult questions of all: How long, and why?"¹⁹ Jeremiah speaks about "divine abuse," although he finally confesses that Yahweh is the righteous one.²⁰ Ezekiel proposes that individuals are not responsible for sins of others. According to Ezekiel 18:20, the failure and success of life depends on one's own decision and deed. Isaiah contains the traditional deuteronomic view of suffering as punishment for sin. However, Second Isaiah introduces a new perspective on theodicy that "an innocent servant dies on behalf of others."²¹ It alters from defining suffering as punishment to defining suffering for the benefit

¹⁷. Simundson, "Suffering," 221.

¹⁸. Crenshaw, "Theodicy," 445.

¹⁹. Crenshaw, "Theodicy," 445.

²⁰. Crenshaw, "Theodicy," 445.

²¹. Crenshaw, "Theodicy," 445.

of others. Second Isaiah proclaims that suffering as a participation in the divine pathos has redemptive value for others.

In the time of exile, the lament tradition is one of widespread responses to catastrophe. The lament accuses that Yahweh is in charge of evil and suffering. Simundson explains, "The lament allows for honest interchange between humans and God, the freedom to admit even bad theology and hostile thoughts," while mourning that Yahweh should have responded justly and swiftly.²² The lament does not offer a cohesive elucidation on the origin and meaning of evil and suffering. Whereas lament psalmists do not try to justify God, they angrily burst out in sorrow. Presenting the words of anger, anguish, and demand, lament psalms sometimes contain no hope of redemption (Ps. 44). However, the lament tradition often proclaims Yahweh as the ultimate foundation of relief and ends with the declaration that Yahweh hears the voices of Yahweh's people and will save them.

The Book of Job, one of the representative theodicy texts in Hebrew Scriptures, boldly questions the problem of innocent suffering (Job 2:3; 30:26). It explores several traditional answers but concludes the theodicy problem as an incomprehensible mystery. Crenshaw states, "The book of Job offered several partial answers—human ignorance, divine mystery, corrective discipline, delayed punishment and rewards—but

²². Simundson, "Suffering," 222.

acknowledged the problem as an insolvable enigma before which the best response was silence in the presence of a self-revealing creator."²³ It is beyond human intelligence to understand the enigma of suffering. Jon D. Levinson explains, "[W]ords of YHWH to Job are intended to contrast humanity's limited capacities with God's infinite powers."²⁴ Since Yahweh does not offer reasonable answers for the suffering of Job, mystery is the final answer of theodicy in the Book of Job. On the other hand, the Book of Job portrays Yahweh's marvelous creating power of the universe, the incapacity of creatures, and the assertion of Yahweh's benevolence.²⁵ Although all goods and evils are part of Yahweh's incomprehensible plan, the Book of Job proclaims that Yahweh has compassion on suffering creatures. Crenshaw states, "Perhaps the enigma of suffering points to the mystery of the biblical God, who gathers human pain into the divine heart."²⁶ Human beings cannot solve the puzzle of agony, but they experience Yahweh's vulnerability to human suffering.

In the corpus of process thought, there is a widespread consensus that God is vulnerable in relation to the world's suffering. Burton Z. Cooper,

²³. Crenshaw, "Theodicy," 445.

²⁴. Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 16.

²⁵. Simundson, "Suffering," 223.

²⁶. Crenshaw, "Theodicy," 447.

who tries to connect biblical ideas to process thought states, "Perhaps the book of Job will not make sense until we see it as turning away from the monarchial image of God and looking forward to a new image of God, namely, to God as vulnerable."²⁷ The Yahweh in the whirlwind is the image of a friend, "the vulnerable one who suffers with him [Job] in his suffering and whose caring presence heals him."²⁸ The vulnerability of Yahweh is the expression of Yahweh's love that hears and responds to human affliction.

The final postexilic approach to the problem of evil is an apocalyptic vision. When it is difficult to anticipate a good life in the current world, some prophetic writers propose imaginary visions of a newly ordered society. In the middle of tension between belief in Yahweh and the reality of suffering, the apocalyptic writings appeal to the future. Crenshaw explains, "Hope springs eternal in the human breast, and patience was deemed essential to learned persons."²⁹ Apocalyptic visions are the expression of hope that Yahweh will not tolerate the current evil to be permanently continued and will amend all injustice and inequality in the long run. Suffering will be abolished definitely in the future of the Lord's

²⁷. Burton Z. Cooper, *Why, God?* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 55.

²⁸. Cooper, *Why, God?*, 58.

²⁹. Crenshaw, "Theodicy," 446.

Day, if it will not disappear here and now. In the Day of Lord, the good would be finally compensated, whereas the evil will be removed.

After the exilic period, the pre-exilic idea of suffering as the corporate punishment was challenged in diverse ways. First, suffering as punishment became an individual issue rather than a communal matter. Second, the positive conception of suffering that is suffering for others began to appear in the Second Isaiah. It was an endeavor "to move beyond suffering as punishment in order to see redeeming value in suffering, either for others or for the sufferer."³⁰ Third, some later prophets challenged Yahweh's arbitrariness. Fourth, there were some efforts to appeal to the mystery. Finally, there was an attempt to appeal to the hope of an apocalyptic future.

Within the system of monotheism, the writers of the Hebrew Bible struggled with explaining the relationship between the sovereignty of Yahweh and the existence of evil.³¹ The Hebrew Scriptures sometimes describes Yahweh as the source of bad as well as the source of good (Isa. 45:7). On the other hand, it also presents Yahweh the compassionate and vulnerable One. Tyron Inbody states, "In some ways this tension between

³⁰. Simundson, "Suffering," 223.

³¹. Watson, "Evil," 678.

love and hate in the image of God is unresolved."³² Since there was no dualistic worldview in the traditional Judaism, there was no demonic figure that causes the suffering in the world. Rather than the dualistic understanding between good God and wicked Devil, the Hebrew Bible presents an "ethical monotheism."³³ Although there is no one solution for the theodicy question, a major solution of the Hebrew Scriptures was to look for Yahweh's justice in the apocalyptic future, along with presenting the mystery of evil by conceptualizing Yahweh as transcending human understanding.³⁴

Post-Holocaust Jewish Responses on the Human Suffering

The traditional understandings of suffering in the Hebrew Scriptures have been succeeded over two millenniums without much complaint. Although there has been some tension between the sovereignty of Yahweh and the suffering of human beings, Jewish people did not doubt Yahweh's mastery of the universe on the whole. However, the event of the Holocaust in which more than six-million Jews were exterminated, changed their tendency from theodicy to antitheodicy. In other words, instead of justifying Yahweh's sovereignty, they try to protect suffering

³². Tyron Inbody, *The Transforming God: An Interpretation of Suffering and Evil* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 84.

³³. Watson, "Evil," 678.

³⁴. Watson, "Evil," 678.

Jews as such. From a perspective of Jewish Scriptures, the Jewish responses on Holocaust can be regarded a modern form of the psalmist lament tradition.

In *(God) After Auschwitz*, Zachary Braiterman presents postmodern Jewish responses to the event of the Holocaust by way of the philosophy of postmodern intellectuals such as Michael Foucault, Edmond Jabes, and Edith Wyschogrod. His main argument is that "antitheodic expression shifts from the margins of classical Jewish literature, moving from the literary horizons afforded by Yiddish and Hebrew literary modernism into the very center of religious thought."³⁵ The transition from theodicy to antitheodicy means that post-Holocaust scholars cease to justify God in the event of the Holocaust and seek to defend the suffering *per se*. Albeit post-holocaust Jewish scholars do not have a uniform approach to the Holocaust, they have the common discursive agenda that is "the Privileged Antitheodic Subject."³⁶ In other words, post-Holocaust scholars use their own style, mood, and sense to describe the event of the Holocaust; however, they are within the antitheodic boundaries attributed to the post-Holocaust discourse.

³⁵. Zachary Braiterman, *(God) after Auschwitz: Tradition and Change in Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 167.

³⁶. Braiterman, *(God) after Auschwitz*, 163.

Braiterman sorts out various slants of Jewish scholars' responses to the event of the Holocaust according to their theodic or antitheodic penchant. According to Braiterman, the theodic tendency is "any utterance whose source attempts to 'justify,' 'explain,' or 'accept' as ultimately meaningful the relationship between God and evil"³⁷; on the other hand, antitheodicy is "any religious response to the problem of evil whose proponents refuse to justify, explain, or accept as somehow meaningful the relationship between God and suffering."³⁸ Antitheodicy does not mean atheism, but the advocates of antitheodicy primarily consider the suffering humans rather than defend God.

Braiterman evaluates the penchant of four modern Jewish scholars: Martin Buber, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Joseph Soloveitchik, and Mordecai Kaplan. Although they propose fundamentally different opinions on the notion of God, covenant, and some other important theological issues, they are in common in the sense that "[they] absolved God by blaming evil on human agents, on a callous Western civilization. At the same time, they sought to frame suffering within the larger context of spiritual catharsis and ethical good."³⁹ Braiterman assails the inclination of those scholars such that they do not consider any antitheodic thoughts

³⁷. Braiterman, *(God) after Auschwitz*, 19.

³⁸. Braiterman, *(God) after Auschwitz*, 31.

³⁹. Braiterman, *(God) after Auschwitz*, 11.

and only maintain the theodic justification of God. This theodic tendency is for the sake of upholding the current social order, which Peter Berger calls "world maintenance."⁴⁰ Braiterman critically says, "In the face of tragedy, Buber, Heschel, Soloveitchik, and Kaplan sought to affirm *guardedly* optimistic appraisals of God, the ultimate direction of providence, the human person, society, Jewish destiny, and the abiding relevance of traditional texts."⁴¹ Albeit there are many different forms of traditional theodicies, the primary function of theodicy is to preserve the God of history in the face of human suffering. Braiterman calls for ceasing this theodicy tendency of defending God in order to creatively bring out good from evil.

On the other hand, Braiterman analyzes three postmodern Jewish approaches to the event of the Holocaust by examining three major post-Holocaust Jewish scholars: Richard Rubenstein, Eliezer Berkovits, and Emil Fackenheim. According to Braiterman, these three scholars have commonality in the fact that they have an antitheodic propensity; that is, they refuse any theodic attempt of justifying God in the face of evil. Braiterman states, "Rubenstein, Berkovits, and Fackenheim abandoned theodicy and theodic texts. They ignored theodic figures who justify,

⁴⁰. Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (reprint, New York: Anchor Books, 1990), 80.

⁴¹. Braiterman, *(God) after Auschwitz*, 7.

explain, or accept the relation between God and catastrophic suffering."⁴² They of course radically differ in their antitheodic solutions such that they reject, adopt, and transform the Jewish tradition after the Holocaust in retrospect. However, the main consensus among them is to maintain the solidarity with the people who experience horrendous evils. This means that the primary task of Jewish antitheodic scholars is not to rescue the God of Israel, but the suffering Israelites *per se*, who represent all the sufferers from all varieties of brutal evil.

Braiterman rightly observes that the response to the Holocaust should be directed toward here-and-now rather than toward life after death or the eschaton. While mentioning the protest of Dostoyevsky's Ivan Karamazov, Braiterman insists, "The suffering of even one single innocent child in this-world disrupts whatever harmony may await him in the world-to-come."⁴³ In relation to the emphasis on here-and-now, Rubenstein, Berkovits, and Fackenheim also propose "the tentative goods they identified belong to this-world and its present, not to a still-uncertain future."⁴⁴ I agree with Braiterman and other post-Holocaust scholars in that the response to the Holocaust should be directed to the present, albeit I

⁴². Braiterman, *(God) after Auschwitz*, 163.

⁴³. Braiterman, *(God) after Auschwitz*, 16.

⁴⁴. Braiterman, *(God) after Auschwitz*, 178.

believe that humans still need an eschatological vision in order to proclaim the final overcoming of evil.

Braiterman brilliantly analyzes various major modern Jewish thinkers; however, he makes a crucial mistake in classifying various theodicy forms of Jewish scholarship. The problem is that his categorizing methodology, the contrast between theodicy and antitheodicy, is not fully adequate to explain the diverse perspectives of Jewish scholars toward the Holocaust. He criticizes theodic advocates in the sense that all the projects of theodicy are fundamentally connected with defending God rather than supporting the suffering creatures; thus, he gives credit only to the antitheodic approaches, while opposing theodic tendency. However, not all advocates of theodicy propose that their main task is to defend God instead of bringing good out of evil for the victims, albeit surely some are apologetic defenders who are willing to preserve traditional Jewish dogma. In fact, the primary concern of many theodic defenders is also the suffering humans *per se* as much as is the case of antitheodicy. The crucial reason that many theodic advocates do not dispose of the notion of God is directly related to the sufferers who still definitely need to preserve their meaning of life in the middle of catastrophe and to find the source of sturdy power to overcome or transform their suffering situations. In this sense, Braiterman's contrast of theodicy tendency and antitheodic tendency toward post-Holocaust Jewish scholars is too stereotypical;

therefore, it does not fully explain the diverse approaches of Jewish scholars to the Holocaust.

Braiterman's research, however, is one of the most valuable studies on the theology of the Holocaust. While Braiterman offers an excellent postmodern microanalysis of the proclivities of modern Jewish scholars toward the Holocaust, he brings out the issue of suffering as such rather than the theological defense of God. In the following section, I will critically examine Rubenstein's antitheodic approach, which is one of radical Jewish response toward the Holocaust.

Rubenstein's God as the Holy Nothingness and the Holocaust

Rubenstein proposes a new notion of God, the Holy Nothingness, in relation to the event of the Holocaust, which represents the most horrendous evil and suffering in the history of the world. While borrowing the phrase "death of God," he constantly rejects the traditional Judeo-Christian notion of God. "The traditional God of covenant and election" or "the God of History" in Jewish religion is, Rubenstein insists, no longer legitimate in the aftermath of the Holocaust. If such a God exists, the Holocaust becomes the work of God. Whereas Rubenstein discards the traditional notion of God, he seeks a new idea of God, the Holy Nothingness so as to reconcile the conflict between the notion of God and the event of the Holocaust.

However, Rubenstein's radical notion of God, the Holy Nothingness, is neither an adequate nor an effective conception of God in explicating the event of the Holocaust. Rubenstein rightly understands that the traditional notion of God does not give proper rationale to the event of the Holocaust. Rubenstein boldly refutes the notion of God who is the omnipotent, the God who acts in history, or the God who will redeem the world, since he believes that the traditional notion of God does not give a proper understanding to the Holocaust. However, the God of the Holy Nothingness does not give a pertinent resolution to the event of the Holocaust, either. I will argue that the radical version of God as the Holy Nothingness is a self-defeating idea and cannot bestow any secure ground for morality and hope for the future.

In order to argue against Rubenstein's notion of the Holy Nothingness, I will first explore the relationship between Rubenstein's theology and Protestant death-of-God theology. Rubenstein has commonality with Protestant death-of-God theologians in a sense of relentlessly rejecting a mainline traditional notion of God. Whereas the Protestant death-of-God theologians literally proclaim the death of God,⁴⁵ Rubenstein proposes a new idea of God. The death of God, for Rubenstein, is not directly related

⁴⁵. Rubenstein understands that Thomas J. J. Altizer literally declares the death of God, which leads to an atheistic assertion that God does not exist. However, it is another issue whether Altizer's death of God refutes the existence of God or not. In my contemplation, it is not likely that Altizer's death of God refers to an atheistic assertion.

to the notion that God is actually dead, but it refers to the cultural phenomenon that humans no longer believe the God of history in the face of the Holocaust. Second, I will examine Rubenstein's rejections on the traditional notion of God. His refusal of the traditional notion of God has threefold meaning: the rejection of the omnipotent God, the refusal of the performing God, and the denial of the redeeming God. Third, I will explore Rubenstein's notion of God as the Holy Nothingness, which is sometimes also called the "ground of all beings" or "Nature itself." The crucial failure of Rubenstein is that he does not properly provide a logically consistent substituting idea of God to replace the traditional notion of God. Rubenstein could not show consistency in maintaining the Holy Nothingness as the transcendent God and as the immanent God. The inconsistent notion of the Holy Nothingness could not provide a plausible answer to the event of the Holocaust and could not give any secure ground for human morality, either.

Rubenstein's Theodicy and Death of God Theology

The death-of-God, which was first coined by Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, became popular phrase during the 1960's with Protestant scholars such as Thomas J. J. Altizer and William Hamilton. With the negative propensity to the death-of-God theology, many critical scholars presuppose that Rubenstein is another death-of-God theologian and is actually an atheist. However, this assumption is not quite plausible in the

sense that Rubenstein puts at himself some distance from Protestant death-of-God theologians, and he in fact does not deny the existence of God.

Rubenstein, along with Protestant death-of-God theologians, radically leaves the normative traditional notion of the God of Judaism and Christianity. However, it is interesting that Rubenstein intermittently approves and refutes the term death-of-God while assailing the traditional notion of God. For instances, Rubenstein says, "He [Dr. Gulshan Khaki, a disciple of a guru,] helped me to see *my* 'death-of-God' theology, with its radical questioning of tradition, was not negative rebellion."⁴⁶ On the other hand, he states, "I never 'willed' the death of the theistic God; I sadly found the idea of such a [traditional] God lacking in credibility in the face of the Holocaust."⁴⁷ The ambiguous position to the death-of-God theology raises a question whether Rubenstein is a death-of-theologian or not. Even more, some traditional Jewish and Protestant scholars question whether Rubenstein is an atheist or not.

It is a widespread presupposition for many modern Jewish scholars that Rubenstein is an atheist or a pagan. For instance, Steven T. Katz understands the meaning of Rubenstein's death-of-God in a literal sense

⁴⁶. Richard L. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 293-94 (*italics is mine*).

⁴⁷. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 2nd ed., 248.

and accuses him of atheism. Katz states, "In response to Auschwitz, Rubenstein has taken the extreme theological position of denying God's existence."⁴⁸ Although many opponents rebuke Rubenstein as an atheist, he does not proclaim the death of God as the denotation of a simple atheistic statement such that there is no God, or human beings do not need belief in God. Braiterman correctly sees, "Rubenstein proclaimed 'the death of God' and the creation of an 'insightful paganism,' but he himself was neither a death of God theologian nor a pagan."⁴⁹ Braiterman rightly uses the rhetorical method in order to figure out the works of various post-Holocaust Jewish scholars. He states, "Under 'rhetoric' I include hyperbolic slogans, polemical overkill, rhetorical overstatement, and gross overinterpretation expressed with the intention to shock readers, foment resistance, rally solidarity, and carve out new theological identities."⁵⁰ Through this rhetorical method, Braiterman could access the inner thoughts of modern Jewish scholars on the Holocaust. Therefore, he proclaims that Rubenstein is not an atheist, pantheist, or pagan, albeit he sometimes uses the expressions, "death of God" and "insightful paganism." Braiterman insists that these terminologies are

⁴⁸. Steven T. Katz, *Post-Holocaust Dialogues* (New York: New York University Press, 1983), 174.

⁴⁹. Braiterman, *(God) after Auschwitz*, 11.

⁵⁰. Braiterman, *(God) after Auschwitz*, 11.

mainly attributed to rhetorical emphasis. In this way, Braiterman overcomes common mistakes of many conservative Jewish scholars when interpreting the antitheodic post-Holocaust scholarship. What Rubenstein constantly hunts for is a proper concept of God for modern Jews who experience the event of the Holocaust. While abandoning the traditional notion of God, Rubenstein, a Jewish rabbi, continues to insist on the importance of the existence of God that proffers the ground of all creatures.

Different from Protestant death-of-God theologians, Rubenstein insists that the assertion of the death-of-God is somewhat problematic because whether God is dead or alive is the question beyond human knowledge or experience. Rubenstein states, "The statement, 'God is dead,' is only significant in what it reveals about those who make it. It imparts information concerning what the speaker believes about God; it reveals nothing about God."⁵¹ This means that human capability cannot ascertain empirically whether God is dead or alive. In this respect, Rubenstein maintains that he is dissimilar to some death-of-God theologians, who insist God's death in literal sense.

Rubenstein does not literally insist that God is dead; on the contrary, he speaks about the cultural propensity that humans do not believe the traditional God of history in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Rubenstein

⁵¹. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 2nd ed., 250.

empathetically says, "It must be stressed... that the death of God is not something that has happened to God."⁵² The death-of-God does not directly denote God's actual death; rather, it is an expression of modern people's denying the traditional notion of God. Betty Rogers Rubenstein and Michael Berenbaum explain, "Rubenstein never wrote or spoke of 'the death of God' but only the 'time of the death of God.' He intended to speak of a condition of man and not a condition of God."⁵³ The death-of-God for Rubenstein only indicates the human discernment or feeling that they do not believe the God of history or the God of covenant and election after the event of the Holocaust. In other words, the death-of-God is a cultural phenomenon in the mentality of modern people who experience the event of the Holocaust.

Rubenstein's Threefold Rejection on the Traditional God

Rubenstein does not deny the existence of God, but he insists that the traditional understanding of God cannot be sustained in present-time because of the event of the Holocaust. Rubenstein's dismissal of the traditional God has a threefold meaning: it is the rejection of the omnipotent God, it is the dismissal of the God who acts in history, and it is the refusal of the God who redeems the creatures.

⁵². Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 2nd ed., 294.

⁵³. Betty Rogers Rubenstein and Michael Berenbaum, eds., *What Kind of God?: Essays in Honor of Richard L. Rubenstein* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1995), 347.

First of all, Rubenstein eliminates the traditional notion of the omnipotent God. He states, "I am convinced that if there is an omnipotent, theistic God, He must be the ultimate author of the gratuitous human evil which abounds in our time."⁵⁴ For Rubenstein, the traditional omnipotent God cannot give a proper rationale to the problem of evil in the world because the omnipotent God becomes the ultimate ruler of history. If all events of history are in the hands of the omnipotent God, the evil as well as the good in history is in the reign of God in the end. Rubenstein states, "If I believed in God as the omnipotent author of the historical drama and Israel as His Chosen People, I had to accept ... [the] conclusion that it was God's will that Hitler committed six million Jews to slaughter. I could not possibly believe in such a God nor could I believe in Israel as the chosen people of God after Auschwitz."⁵⁵ God as the omnipotent Being cannot avoid being accused of the event of the Holocaust. To understand God as the omnipotent Being, for Rubenstein, implies that God wanted six million Jews to be killed, or that "the death camp[s] were ultimately his handiwork."⁵⁶ In other words, if God is

⁵⁴. Richard L. Rubenstein, *The Religious Imagination* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Inc., 1968), 140.

⁵⁵. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1966), 47.

⁵⁶. Rubenstein, *Morality and Eros* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1970), 183.

omnipotent and creates human beings and nature with God's own good will, Rubenstein insists that God should have abolished the event of the Holocaust. Whitehead and other process thinkers share the same idea on the traditional idea of the omnipotent God. Whitehead states, "If this conception [of the omnipotent God] be adhered to, there can be no alternative except to discern in Him the origin of all evil as well as of all good. He is then the supreme author of the play, and to Him must therefore be ascribed its shortcomings as well as its success."⁵⁷ However, Whitehead differs from Rubenstein on the omnipotent God in that Whitehead tries to revise the meaning of divine power rather than simply discard the idea of the omnipotent God as in the case of Rubenstein and death-of-God theologians.

Although Rubenstein abandons the notion of the omnipotent God, he does not consider that the omnipotent God is irreconcilable with human freedom. Following the rabbinic traditional understanding of human freedom, Rubenstein declares that God is not "an enemy of human freedom."⁵⁸ His argument on human freedom is that human beings originally have partial freedom because they are created as the ones who have only limited power. Rubenstein says, "To exist is to be something

⁵⁷. Alfred N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), 180.

⁵⁸. Rubenstein, *Religious Imagination*, 149.

definite and limited, to be set apart and defined by the rest of the matrix of existence... Creation meant limit; existence could only be partial."⁵⁹

Because the human being *per se* is limited and partial, Rubenstein understands that he or she can have only limited freedom; therefore, the idea of the omnipotent God is not incompatible with human freedom.

Rubenstein's argument on human freedom seems to be coherent; however, it is flawed in that he fundamentally connects the concept of freedom to the meaning of ultimate power, which means that one can do whatever one wants to do. His logic on human freedom is, for example, humans cannot decide where to be born or when to die; thus, they only have limited freedom. It is true that humans have only limited ability in that they cannot decide where to be born or cannot fly by themselves.

However, these limitations are not mainly related to human freedom but human ability. In other words, the fact that one cannot choose his or her skin color is not the matter of freedom, but the matter of power. Freedom by definition does not require the status of power that one can do whatever he or she wants to do. The term for this status is traditionally called omnipotence, which implies absolute power rather than freedom. According to *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, freedom refers to "the power to make one's own choices or decisions

⁵⁹. Rubenstein, *Religious Imagination*, 149-50.

without constraint from within or without."⁶⁰ Following this definition, one can have genuine freedom, even though one is limited in ability. The issue that matters is whether humans have the power of self-determination within a certain circumstance or not, albeit humans are limited in power. In other words, human freedom is not related to the condition of perfect power, but the notion of genuine freedom is the matter of freely choosing one thing or another within a certain situation.

Unlike Rubenstein, process thinkers insist that the notion of the omnipotent God contradicts the notion of the genuine freedom of creatures. The argument of process thought on the relationship between the omnipotent God and human freedom is directly related to the matter of the monopoly of power. Divine omnipotence implies that God actually or potentially has a monopoly on power.⁶¹ The notion that God can unilaterally intervene in the events of history is not compatible the genuine autonomy of creature. In other words, the notion that God has a monopoly on power contradicts to the notion of the autonomy of creatures. Thus, process thinkers insist that the meaning of divine power should be revised in a proper way that does not conflict with the freedom of the actual entity. According to the process prospective, God's power is

⁶⁰. *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, s.v. "freedom."

⁶¹. David Ray Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 174.

persuasive, not coercive.⁶² God does not simply coercively oppose the freedom of creatures. God does not and cannot coercively predetermine or control other actual entities. On the contrary, God persuades creatures to the best possible values because they have autonomy, the power of self-decision. Whitehead states, "All actual entities share with God this character of self-causation. For this reason every actual entity also shares with God the characteristics of transcending all other actual entities, including God."⁶³ The genuine freedom of the actual entity is not compatible to the traditional idea of omnipotent God, since God's power is shared power in principle. Every creature has the genuine power of self-determination; hence, God cannot coercively negate the freedom of creatures.

Since Rubenstein disregards the contradicting relationship between the omnipotent God and human freedom, he misses another way of understanding of divine power, which does not counteract the freedom of actual entity. God as the supreme power can have perfect power without opposing the freedom of creatures. In other words, God is omnipotent not in the sense that God unilaterally controls creatures, but in

⁶². Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Free Press, 1961), 166.

⁶³. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne, corrected ed. (New York: Free Press, 1978), 339.

the sense that God reveals perfect love to the world while persuasively luring creatures to the best possible ideals.

Rubenstein insists that the notion of the omnipotent God should be discarded because the omnipotent God is not consistent with the event of Holocaust. However, he does not provide any substitute meaning of divine power and aggressively concludes that there is no omnipotent God. Critiquing Rubenstein, Braiterman states, "He [Rubenstein] struggles but ultimately fails to translate his own theological insight into traditional trope and image."⁶⁴ Rubenstein could not discover another option between the traditional notion of the omnipotent God and the radical departure of the death-of-God theology. Since he fails to find a new meaning of divine supreme power, Rubenstein simply abandons the notion of the omnipotent God.

Second, Rubenstein's opposition to the traditional God implies the rejection of the God who acts in history. Rubenstein writes, "Our death-of-God experience rests on loss of faith in the God-who-acts-in-history."⁶⁵ He insists that the God who participates in the history of creatures should have prevented the Holocaust. In Rubenstein's contemplation, God does not participate in human history. Rubenstein states, "If God is ultimately responsible for history, one can with much justice find many of

⁶⁴. Braiterman. *(God) after Auschwitz*, 109.

⁶⁵. Rubenstein, *Morality and Eros*, 184.

His (God's) actions unworthy by human standards."⁶⁶ Since the prevailing unnecessary evils contradict to the notion of the acting God, Rubenstein rejects the notion of God who performs in history.

In Rubenstein's contemplation, the God who acts in history presupposes the notion of the God who is benevolent. In other words, the rejection of the acting God also means the dismissal of the benevolent God. Rubenstein argues, "I believe that the theistic notion of God's omnipotence contradicts the ascription of ultimate goodness to Him."⁶⁷ If God is omnipotent and benevolent, God should not permit evils and sufferings in the world. In other words, the God who permits or plans the Holocaust does not have perfect power or perfect goodness, or else both. Rubenstein does not consider both divine characteristics of God; so to speak, God is neither omnipotent nor benevolent. The assertion that God is not benevolent does not imply that God is malevolent toward creatures; rather, God is neutral in the affairs of creatures. In order to describe the neutrality of God Rubenstein often uses the term God of Nature. Braiterman explains, "The God of Nature [of Rubenstein] is neither a calming nor a loving presence. Standing beyond all categories, the God of Holy Nothingness is an amoral power that transcends human

⁶⁶. Rubenstein, *Religious Imagination*, 130.

⁶⁷. Rubenstein, *Religious Imagination*, 140.

categories of good and evil."⁶⁸ Rubenstein's God of the Holy Nothingness is beyond human understanding of good and evil. One cannot describe God as good or bad. God is beyond human category of good and bad.

The denial of God who acts in history raises an issue whether Rubenstein is a deist or not. Deism refers to the notion of God who created and then abandoned the creatures of the universe. Plainly speaking, the opposition of the God-who-acts-in-history is the God-who-does-not-act-in-history. Even though Rubenstein explains a new notion of God, the Holy Nothingness as the ground of all beings or Nature itself, this God does not participate in the history of creatures at all. Rubenstein states, "When I say we live in the time of the death of God, I mean that the thread uniting God and man, heaven and earth has been broken. We stand in a cold, silent, unfeeling cosmos, unaided by any purposeful power beyond our own resources."⁶⁹ The Holy Nothingness is just an onlooker, and history itself has an autonomy, which does not depend on God of the Holy Nothingness. I suspect that it is hard for Rubenstein to escape the critique that he is a deist, unless he revises the notion that the Holy Nothingness does not participate in the history of the universe.

The abandonment of the God who acts in history is another mistake on Rubenstein's notion of God, which is attributed to his misunderstanding

⁶⁸. Braiterman. *(God) after Auschwitz*, 98.

⁶⁹. Rubenstein, *after Auschwitz*, 1st ed., 49.

of the relationship between divine power and human freedom. If one accepts divine power not as coercion but as persuasion, one can realize how God participates in the history of creatures. According to process thought, God provides creatures with an initial subjective aim as a lure toward "ideal possibilities, possibilities [that creatures] may or may not actualize."⁷⁰ If God's initial aims are actualized, creatures will experience the maximum value and intensity possible for it within its circumstances. In adverse, if creatures make a decision not to actualize the initial aims presented by God, there is a failure of value and intensity. God's persuasive power inspires freedom in the creature and seeks to "maximize opportunities for good and minimize risks of evil."⁷¹ God gives the initial aim, and the subject develops the subjective aim. This implies that creatures are responsible for the good and evil in the world, and that God's power always operates within the creature as a creative lure without defying the autonomy of the creature.

Third, Rubenstein's rejection of the traditional God means the dismissal of the idea of God the Redeemer. It cannot be maintained, in Rubenstein's speculation, that God will finally redeem the suffering of

⁷⁰. Barry L. Whitney, *Evil and the Process God* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1985), 96.

⁷¹. Charles Hartshorne, "A New Look at the Problem of Evil," in *Current Philosophical Issues*, ed. Frederick C. Dommeyer (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1966), 210.

creatures at the end of history. Rubenstein states, "The Judeo-Christian belief in the redeemer God is in reality the collective dream of Western man. It is a projection into the distant future of the child's yearning for a world relieved of the strife, tension, and anxiety which pervade the actual world."⁷² For Rubenstein, eschatology is a false hope or an illusion of human desire. In addition to abandoning the traditional eschatological perspective, Rubenstein also rejects "theology of hope" in the same sense that hope might prove to be only an illusion. Rubenstein states, "Nor can the theology of hope entirely escape the suspicion that faith has been focused on the future because it is the only remaining domain available to contemporary man for credulity, fantasy, and wish-fulfillment."⁷³

In terms of the rejection of the redeeming God in the future, Rubenstein accepts Karl Marx's critique of religion such that eschatology provides a mere deceptive compensation for the suffering of human beings, and in this manner eschatology facilitates the situation that caused the affliction. Rubenstein correctly emphasizes that the response to the Holocaust should be aimed at not the eschaton but the present. I agree with Rubenstein in that the approach to the Holocaust should be directed to here-and-now, although I consider that human beings should preserve an eschatological vision based on God. It is because human

⁷². Rubenstein, *Morality and Eros*, 184.

⁷³. Rubenstein, *Morality and Eros*, 185.

beings need hope for the future and the proclamation of the final overcoming of evil. What Rubenstein is missing on the idea of redeeming God is that the God who will redeem in the future is also the God who continues to redeem the creature at present. In other words, the hope of the future as a final overcoming of evil can offer redeeming power here and now.

Even though Rubenstein proposes human society without the belief in the transcendent God of history, he does not discard hope for human history. Rather than the hope of depending on the transcendent God, he proposes a secular version of hope. Rubenstein states, "The belief has become so pervasive in the world of Judeo-Christian inheritance that hope for the coming of the 'kingdom' is no longer necessarily dependent upon faith in the existence of God. Marxism, for example, has its own secular version of the coming of the kingdom."⁷⁴ Abandoning the traditional God, for Rubenstein, does not mean that humans should fall into the state of hopelessness. He declares, "The world of the death of the biblical God need not be a place of gloom or despair."⁷⁵ Rubenstein boldly explains that humans can have meaningful lives without the God who will redeem. Then, the question is how we can sustain a meaningful life without believing in God. Rubenstein proposes that humans "must"

⁷⁴. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 2nd ed., 294.

⁷⁵. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 2nd ed., 306.

and "can" produce the meaning of life. He states, "In the face of the abyss that threatens to engulf us, Jews must and can create that 'meaning' which there is to be, and they do this primarily in community."⁷⁶ The issue that matters is whether we can make any ultimate objective value or hope without any transcendental notion of God. Rubenstein's hope based on the secular version, I suspect, cannot give a secure ground for the future.

God as the Holy Nothingness

Rubenstein's threefold rejection of the traditional God raises a question of the meaning of belief in God. The God who is omnipotent is dead, the God who acts in history with a good purpose is dead, and the God who redeems humankind is also dead. Then, the questions are: is God still meaningful for us? If God is still considerable, what kind of God is He or She? Although humans do not need to believe in those traditional ideas of God, Rubenstein proposes, they can still have a meaningful notion of God. Rubenstein states, "I believe there is a conception of God which does not falsify reality and which remains meaningful after the death of the God-who-acts-in-history."⁷⁷ Rubenstein calls this unfalsified momentous notion of God the Holy Nothingness.

⁷⁶. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 68.

⁷⁷. Rubenstein, *Morality and Eros*, 185.

Rubenstein's idea of the Holy Nothingness is basically attributed to the terms, "Geist" by G. W. F. Hegel and "Ground of Being" by Paul Tillich. Rubenstein explicitly states, "Hegel called the divine Ground *Geist* or Spirit; Paul Tillich used the term 'Ground of Being.' There is nothing original about my use of Holy Nothingness."⁷⁸ Along with these two distinctive scholars' influence on the formation of the Holy Nothingness, Rubenstein's notion of God is also rooted in the Jewish mysticism influenced by Gershom Scholem. Rubenstein explains that the notion of the Holy Nothingness is a compound of various religious thoughts. He states, "I have often expressed my deepest religious feelings by saying that omnipotent Nothingness is Lord of all creation. This affirmation of mystical faith seems to offer a concise way of synthesizing mystical, dialectical, psychoanalytic, and archaic insights concerning God as the ground, content, and final destiny of all things."⁷⁹ Even though Rubenstein borrows some ideas from various religious traditions and philosophies in order to build up a new notion of God, he does not merely adopt or borrow those thoughts; rather, he seeks to establish his own conception of God, the Holy Nothingness.

Rubenstein speaks of three conceptions of Holy Nothingness: (1) Holy Nothingness as the Source of the Universe, (2) Holy Nothingness as Nature itself, (3) and Holy Nothingness as the Sacred. First of all, the Holy

⁷⁸. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 2nd ed., 301.

⁷⁹. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 2nd ed., 305.

Nothingness refers to the Source of all creatures, including human beings. The Holy Nothingness simply does not mean the state of emptiness. It implies the ground or source of all finitudes. Rubenstein writes, "God as the 'Nothingness' is not to suggest that God is a void; on the contrary, the Holy Nothingness is a plenum so rich that all existence derives therefrom. God as the 'Nothing' is not absence of being, but a superfluity of being."⁸⁰ Using the negative theology, Rubenstein explains God as the One beyond any definite explanation of finitude. This indiscernible God is the Holy Nothingness, who is the source of the universe. While explaining the conception of the Holy Nothingness, Braiterman writes, "The Infinite God [of Rubenstein] is a no-thing whose existence remains distinct from any measure, quality, or character. In *After Auschwitz*, God's Holy Nothingness constitutes a majesty that stands over against human finitude."⁸¹ Rubenstein calls this indescribable Being beyond human knowledge the Holy Nothingness, which is the ground of all being. In other words, the Holy Nothingness is the primordial origin for all existence.

Second, the Holy Nothingness is Nature itself. Rubenstein's concern about the divine character is inclined toward the notion of the immanent God. He understands that the immanent God than the transcendent God is more appropriate to modern human beings. Rubenstein states, "Where

⁸⁰. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 2nd ed., 298.

⁸¹. Braiterman, *(God) after Auschwitz*, 98.

God is thought of as predominantly immanent in the cosmos, the cosmos in all of its temporal and spatial multiplicity is understood as the manifestation of the single unified and unifying, self-realizing Divine Source, Ground, Spirit, or Absolute."⁸² Rubenstein goes on to say, "No more will God be seen as the transcendent Lord of nature, controlling it as if it were a marionette at the end of a string. God will be seen as the source and life of nature, the being of the beings which ephemerally and epiphenomenally are nature's self-expression."⁸³ Rubenstein does not consider God to be the transcendent but immanent. God is identified with Nature itself. Even in the second edition of *After Holocaust*, he does not change his emphasis on the aspect of the immanent God. Rubenstein states, "Although this position is modified in the current edition, I continue to emphasize the immanence rather than the radical transcendence of God."⁸⁴

The question that can be raised is: can the Holy Nothingness as Nature itself be the primordial ground of all being without any transcendent notion of God? The dilemma comes from the relationship between God as the Source of the universe and God as Nature itself. This is a question about whether Rubenstein's God is pantheistic or panentheistic. The

⁸². Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 2nd ed., 295.

⁸³. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 95.

⁸⁴. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 2nd ed., xiii.

difference between panentheism and pantheism is whether one accepts the notion of transcendental aspect of God or not. Panentheism understands God as both transcendent and immanent, whereas pantheism understands God as only immanent. Since Rubenstein does not present a clear relationship between the transcendent aspect of God and the immanent aspect of God, scholars who study post-Holocaust Judaism disagree whether Rubenstein is pantheist or panentheist. For example, Braiterman proposes that Rubenstein's notion of God is panentheistic rather than pantheistic. Braiterman states, "He [Rubenstein] is not a pantheist, much less a polytheist. Rubenstein is a 'panentheist'—a theologian who sees the world constituting the life of a divinity that transcends it. As the unitary source of life, death, and the natural wheel, God remains ontologically distinct from nature. Revealed in nature, Godhood unfolds in the world while constituting the primordial origin to which all lives ultimately return."⁸⁵ On the contrary, Katz understands that Rubenstein does not consider any transcendent aspect of God. Katz states, "Certainly, according to Rubenstein, no transcendental revelatory Absolute exists which will or could infuse our life with significance; all pious traditional nostalgia of this sort is to be recognized as the false, and no longer efficacious, opiate that it is."⁸⁶ This opposite interpretation of

⁸⁵. Braiterman. *(God) after Auschwitz*, 95.

⁸⁶. Katz, *Post-Holocaust Dialogues*, 189.

Rubenstein's Holy Nothingness is mainly rooted in Rubenstein's ambiguous discernment on the idea of God. In other words, Rubenstein does not present a clear relationship between the transcendent God and the immanent God. Katz correctly criticizes, "A close reading of Rubenstein's work suggests that he has given insufficient attention to metaphysical considerations.... What is required is a new and better metaphysics--either with or without God, as the facts of the case turn out to warrant--rather than the erroneous, and ultimately self-defeating, disregard for all serious metaphysical investigation."⁸⁷ Since Rubenstein does not give a sufficient explanation of the Holy Nothingness with philosophical accuracy or logical coherency, Braiterman and Katz focus on different aspects of the character of the Holy Nothingness. In other words, Braiterman puts more weight on the Holy Nothingness as the Ground of all beings, whereas Katz emphasizes the Holy Nothingness as Nature itself.

Rubenstein himself fails to present a lucid explanation of the relationship between the Holy Nothingness as the Ground of being and the Holy Nothingness as Nature itself. In fact, I suspect that this is the dilemma that Rubenstein fundamentally has in his theological scheme. If Rubenstein understands the Holy Nothingness as both transcendent and immanent such as Tillich proposes, the Holy Nothingness cannot avoid

⁸⁷. Katz, *Post-Holocaust Dialogues*, 183.

responsibility for the event of the Holocaust because the Holy Nothingness as the Ground of all being should be related to evil as well as good in a certain manner. Rubenstein states, "God is the ocean and we are the waves. In some sense each wave has its [own] moment in which it is distinguishable as a somewhat separate entity. Nevertheless, no wave is entirely distinct from the ocean which is its substantial ground."⁸⁸ Each wave of the universe contains sometimes good and sometimes bad. If the Holy Nothingness is the ground or source of all beings as the ocean, I suspect, the Holy Nothingness is also responsible for the unnecessary evils just as in the case of the omnipotent God. Braiterman correctly sees, "The God of Nature directly participates in mayhem. The God of Holy Nothingness is omnipresent.... This God resides within destruction. The Holy Nothingness generates this-world and its vicissitudes from out of its own fecund plenitude."⁸⁹ In other words, the event of the Holocaust still menaces Rubenstein's notion of the Holy Nothingness, just as the case of the traditional notion of God. This perplexity of the relationship between the transcendent God and the immanent God keeps Rubenstein from presenting a vivid explanation of the relationship between the Holy Nothingness as the ground of all being and the Holy Nothingness as Nature itself. After all, he could not propose a cohesive solution to the

⁸⁸. Rubenstein, *Morality and Eros*, 186.

⁸⁹. Braiterman, *(God) after Auschwitz*, 99-100.

event of the Holocaust because he sporadically admits and denies the transcendental aspect of the Holy Nothingness.

Third, the notion of the Holy Nothingness preserves the notion of the sacred in the religious life of human beings. Rubenstein states, "Their experience of the death of God rests upon their loss of faith in the transcendent God of History, but not necessarily upon the loss of the sense of the sacred."⁹⁰ For Rubenstein, the sense of the sacred mostly implies the Jewish practices of religious life. Human life without the transcendent God still demands the religious Law in order to sustain daily lives. Rubenstein insists, "No longer able to believe in a transcendent God who is sovereign over human history and who rewards and punishes men and women according to their deserts, they nevertheless render homage to that God in the rituals and liturgy of the community of their inheritance."⁹¹

The issue that can be raised is whether this religious Law still has a normative authority in human behavior after the death of God or not. Rubenstein insists, "If we must live without God, religious law is more necessary for us than ever. Our temptation to anarchic omnipotence and the total indifference of the cosmos to our deeds call forth the need for a set of guidelines to enable us to apprehend the limits of appropriate

⁹⁰. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 2nd ed., 294.

⁹¹. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 2nd ed., 294.

behavior."⁹² Unfortunately, Rubenstein does not much speak of the dilemma; that is, if God is not the transcendent God who rules the history of human beings, the religious Law cannot legitimately sustain human's daily life. Katz correctly criticizes, "Can the socio-religious rituals, customs, liturgical activities, as well as the wide range of mitzvot continue to provide 'meaning,' even if only this-worldly and existential, for Jews and Judaism in the new, naturalistic, pagan context envisioned by Rubenstein?"⁹³ Braiterman also argues against Rubenstein, "The death of God actually augments the value of traditional rituals and institutions. In a world without the comfort of providence, they provide a modicum of meaning and security."⁹⁴ Without belief in the God who is the transcendent, traditional religious ritual and Law cannot bestow the secure norms of human life.

Rubenstein's conception of the religious Law does not offer the genuine moral bedrock for human behavior because the God who confers the Law is dead. In Rubenstein's understanding of the religious Law, there is no room for insisting on the solid ground of morality. In other words, Rubenstein's understanding of Law does not provide an

⁹². Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 2nd ed., 261.

⁹³. Katz, *Post-Holocaust Dialogues*, 190.

⁹⁴. Braiterman, *(God) after Auschwitz*, 106.

appropriate moral foundation for society. Morality can have justification and motivation only as it accepts the notion of the God who bestows it.

Concluding Remarks

The pivotal contribution of Rubenstein to modern scholarship is that he brings the problem of the Holocaust for the first time into the modern world. Braiterman states, "For better or worse, he was the first Jewish theologian to reject providence [of God], to complain that history remains a terrible mess that no God, reason, or meaning could ever hope to redeem."⁹⁵ Rubenstein's radical rejection of the traditional notion of God has influenced many modern scholars to reassess the meaning of God in the aftermath of the Holocaust and could focus on the situation of the suffering people rather than theologically defending God. Braiterman states, "I cannot but suspect that Rubenstein's blistering attacks helps prompt many thinkers to 'rediscover' antitheodicy within the tradition."⁹⁶ Traditional Jewish theists such as Martin Buber, Abraham Joshua Herschel, and Mordecai Kaplan maintain the idea that there is no inconsistency between the God who is omnipotent and benevolent and the event of the Holocaust. The main scheme of traditional Jewish scholars is to defend

⁹⁵. Braiterman, *(God) after Auschwitz*, 110.

⁹⁶. Braiterman. *(God) after Auschwitz*, 12.

God and their traditions rather than to preserve the people who suffer from the Holocaust, which stands for all kinds of suffering in the world. Unlike traditional theists, Rubenstein brings out the issue of the suffering people *per se* in place of apologetically defending God. I agree with Rubenstein in this respect that the apologetic attitude cannot be a right starting point to the discussion of theodicy. The attempt to justify God cannot be a proper motif in the discussion of the problem of evil, just as the anti-theistic attempt to assault the existence of God cannot be a right foundation for theodicy. The fundamental basis for theodicy should be located not in offending or defending God but in suffering as such.

While Rubenstein emphasizes the solidarity with the suffering, he radically discards the traditional notion of God. Rubenstein maintains that the idea of God who is omnipotent, participates in history, and redeems the world is not legitimate. On the contrary, he proposes a new notion of God, the Holy Nothingness. However, the conception of the Holy Nothingness as the Ground of all being and Nature itself does not show internal consistency. The predicament, which is the main problem, is that Rubenstein does not present a clear relationship between the Ground of all being and Nature itself. Since he does not want to fall into the accusation of pantheism, he keeps the notion of the Holy Nothingness both as the Ground of all being and Nature itself. However, the Holy

Nothingness as the Ground of all being can no more escape the charge of the event of Holocaust than can the traditional notion of God.

I maintain that the notion of God must be sustained in order to support the suffering people from the event of the Holocaust. There is no definite need to reject the notion of God in order to save suffering people. The primary concern of many scholars, including process thinkers, is also the suffering humans as much as in the case of Rubenstein, albeit surely some are apologetic defenders who are willing only to preserve traditional dogmas and institutions. The primary reason for preserving the notion of God is simply to defend God; rather, it is intended to focus on the suffering people who desperately need a secure ground for meaningful life in the middle of tragedy. It is also necessary to provide a strong basis for human life. The crucial reason that I do not dispose of the notion of God is directly related to the sufferer who must still preserve the meaning of life in the midst of tragedy. This is the most reliable foundation of humanity. Rubenstein's Holy Nothingness has two crucial deficiencies: it does not show the logical consistency of the problem of evil, especially regarding the conception of God, and secondly it cannot offer any secure ground of hope for the future or for human morality and life.

Chapter 2

The Problem of Suffering and Evil in the New Testament and Early Christianity

The Formation and Image of the Devil as a Dualistic Answer for the Problem of Evil in Early Christianity

Modern Christians consider the Devil as the symbol or the reality of the cosmic opponent against God. However, this hostile image of the Devil does not have its origins from ancient Judaism, Hellenism, or primitive Christianity itself. The inimical image of the Devil, which is common in early Christianity, is attributed to Persian ancient religion. As a consequence of Babylonian Exile, Zoroastrian religion in Persia transmitted the conception of the Devil into the postexilic Jewish society and early Christianity.

In ancient Israel, there was no place for the conception of the Devil because of its monistic worldview. The concept of the Devil is a derivative of dualistic worldview, which presupposes the constant conflict between God and Devil. On the contrary, the monistic worldview understands that all beings of the universe have appropriate roles. Explaining the monistic worldview, Gregory J. Riley states, "The spiritual world was conceived as a unified system, with every part holding an honored and proper place.... In the monistic universe, there are gods of the upper world of light and those of the earth and underworld, good spirits and destructive spirits, each with

its own proper function.”¹ People living in the monistic world consider their world as one well-organized universe from the highest God to trivial creatures.² Since the world is basically understood a continuing harmonized society, there was no concept of the cosmic adversary that is called Satan or Devil. In addition, there were no ideas of demons, Devil's followers, which cause troubles directly or entice humans to commit sins within the system of the postexilic Judaism and early Christianity.³ The dualism of God and the Devil is almost entirely absent from the Hebrew Scriptures, especially from biblical literatures before the Exile. The book of Job speaks of a heavenly being called the Satan who is an adversary of human beings. Satan entices, tests, and seeks to destroy humans. However, one of these rare references to the Devil in Hebrew Scriptures does not directly depict the Devil as the cosmic adversary against God, and it is most likely influenced by Persian Zoroastrianism rather than originated from ancient Judaism.

Neither did the inimical image of the Devil originate from the Greco-Roman world because the Greco-Roman society also has a monistic worldview. People in the Greco-Roman world believed that every rise and

¹. Gregory J. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), 23.

². Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 190.

³. Riley, *The River of God* (New York, NY: HarperCollins World, 2001), 91.

fall and blessing and disaster was not attributed to evil spirits, but depended on the choices of each individual.⁴ The good spirits offer people good things on behalf of their goodness; likewise, the evil spirits offer people bad things due to their badness.⁵ However, the spirits of calamity in Greco-Roman literatures do not tempt directly people to sin in order to bring suffering into the human world. In the tale of Four Ages, *Hesiod* speaks of *dimones*, who are the souls of the dead people in the Golden age.⁶ Although *dimones* had an inimical image of "demon in league with the Devil" in early Christianity, they were originally neutral in morality. In other words, *dimones* can be either good or evil according to given situations. Riley explains, "In classical Greek, to be under the power of a daimon was often a blessing, granting prophetic foresight or heroic courage; it could also be a curse, however, driving one to insanity."⁷ In fact, the role of *dimones* in *Hesiod* has a somewhat positive role. *Dimones* protect human beings and to operate the justice of Zeus in the world.⁸ They were agents of Zeus to perform the will of Zeus like angels in

⁴. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 23-24.

⁵. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 24.

⁶. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 33.

⁷. Riley, *River of God*, 112.

⁸. Riley, *River of God*, 19.

Christianity.⁹ It is also valuable to note that the conception of the Devil in Christianity is not attributed to Hades, who is the underworld God in the Greco-Roman religion. Although Hades is stubborn and frightening, he rules the underworld with justice just like Zeus does in the upper world.¹⁰ Unlike the Devil and the evil cohorts in early Christianity, Hades does not seek to destroy human beings. Although the writers of New Testament and other literatures in early Christianity frequently utilize familiar ideas such as *dimones*, Hades, and so forth, the worldview of Greco-Roman society is basically similar to the worldview of Judaism in the sense of their common monistic worldview. Accordingly, the inimical image of the Devil does not have its originality from Greco-Roman religion as well as Jewish religion.

The harmful image of the Devil is a derivate from the dualism of Zoroastrian religion. During the Exile in 6th century B.C.E., Israel was heavily influenced by the dualistic spiritual worldview of the Persian Zoroastrianism. The typical harmful image of the Devil in Zoroastrian religion is different from the images of other ancient foreign gods such as the Canaanite god Baal and the ancient Babylonian god Marduk in *Enuma Elish*. Ancient gods in combat myths and Zoroastrian Devil fundamentally differ in that the former is rooted in the monistic worldview, whereas the latter is based on the dualistic worldview. Put another way, Baal or Marduk plays a role

⁹. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 129.

¹⁰. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 141.

as the one good God like Yahweh does, whereas Devil has a function as the cosmic opponent against the one good God, Ahura Mazda. In Canaanite religion, however, Mot, which appears in a great dragon, is an enemy of Baal. Jon D. Levenson explains, "Death: because the same word (mt) denotes in Ugaritic the name of one of Baal's foes, Mot, the deadly son of El, who succeeds in swallowing Baal."¹¹ Here the Persian concept of the Devil might find a preliminary form,¹² although Canaanite and Zoroastrian culture hardly had a chance to encounter each other.

Along with the dualistic worldview, the Zoroastrian religion also presents a certain type of monism. Although Zoroastrianism strictly compares the reality of God with Devil, it proclaims that Ahura Mazda is the only one genuine God. The Devil is not true God, but merely a cosmic opponent to the one true God of all. Riley states, "The Zoroastrians had taught that there was but one true God, and that the gods of the nations were demons."¹³ Although Evil Spirit is the source of the evil and suffering, Zoroastrian religion taught, the true God stands behind all events of the world. These events of the world include evil elements as well as good factors. Therefore, it was not easy task for Zoroastrian religious thinkers to

¹¹. Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 29-30.

¹². Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 141.

¹³. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 194.

relate the sovereignty of God and the harmful Devil with the suffering and evil of the world. Zoroastrian thinkers proposed that there are two forms of the origin of the Devil. Riley explains, "In one form, Ahura Mazda emanated twin offspring, the Holy Spirit and the Evil Spirit. In the second form, the two spirits were uncreated twins existing from eternity."¹⁴ These two forms of Devil's origin in Zoroastrianism immediately show the dilemma in relation to the suffering of the world and the sovereignty of God. If one says that the Evil Spirit is originated from Ahura Mazda, the benevolence of the true God becomes dubious. On the other hand, once one insists that the Evil Spirit was not created, there is a problem of the sovereignty of the true one God of all. In both cases, God attains a cosmic adversary the Devil at any rate.¹⁵ However, this unsolved dilemma of the Devil's origin has been constantly problematic in Christianity from the beginning to the present.

In the postexilic Israel period and the primitive Christianity, monism and dualism are mixed together. However, the dualistic worldview became prevalent, and the inimical image of the Devil was broadly accepted by the people in early Christianity. Three dominant Jewish sects in the emerging period of Christianity are Sadducees, Pharisees, and Essenes. The Sadducees, who had a monistic worldview, did not believe in

¹⁴. Riley, *River of God*, 94.

¹⁵. Riley, *River of God*, 94.

the reality of Devil as well as the life after death.¹⁶ Whereas Sadducees maintain the ancient tradition of Judaism, Pharisees and Essenes try to transform the old Jewish tradition and accept the dualistic conceptions of God and Devil, body and soul, and earthly world and heavenly world.¹⁷ Due to the gradual influence of the Zoroastrian dualism, the negative images of Devil and demons appeared in postexilic Jewish literatures and early Christian literatures, and ancient Jews and Christians in this period started to acknowledge the existence of Devil and Devil's followers. Jesus and his followers are also influenced by this Zoroastrian dualistic worldview. The gospels witness that Jesus fought against the Devil throughout his public life, and that the followers of Jesus also fought the spiritual battle against the cosmic dark forces. It was a widespread consensus for the people in early Christianity that Devil and Devil's followers were spiritual enemies of God and the believing community.

Although people in the Greco-Roman world do not have the harmful image of Devil and Devil's followers, the idea of personified fate and the conflicting relationship among gods are similar to the roles of the Devil and demons in Persian Zoroastrianism. Riley states, "The function, though not the person, of 'divine evil' among the Greeks was filled by the

¹⁶. Anthony J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees in Palestinian Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001), 110.

¹⁷. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 194.

concept of fate, personified as three weavers weaving the tapestry of life's events: as one cannot change the pattern woven into a rug, one cannot change what the Fates have decreed for humans."¹⁸ The ancients of the Greco-Romans world believed that ambiguous dark elements of the world such as natural disasters or innocent afflictions are attributed to fate and the jealousies of gods.¹⁹ Like the Devil and dark powers are divine enemies in Zoroastrianism, the divine enemies in Hellenism are tragic fate and the ambiguous jealousies of the gods. Riley explains, "The Greeks had always lived in an ambiguous universe, where Fate and the jealousies of the gods had functioned as did the Devil among the Persians. So they brought their own related version of why the righteous suffered and celebrated that story in some of Western civilization's greatest literature."²⁰ By way of the predestined will of the gods, the fate and the ambiguous gods control all events in the world. Every suffering and death is planned by the will of gods. Although the image of Devil and his followers are stronger than the image of fate and the jealousies of gods, their roles are basically akin.²¹ Riley states, "The universe had a dark side: Fate, the jealousies of the gods, and the Devil and the dark powers all

¹⁸. Riley, *River of God*, 96.

¹⁹. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 28.

²⁰. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 28.

²¹. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 84.

conspired against the innocent and brought them to ruin."²² In both systems of Greco-Roman world and the early Christianity, including postexilic Judaism, people are attacked by spiritual beings and encouraged to choosing good in order to receive genuine rewards from God.

The adoption of Zoroastrian dualism provided two positive roles in the post-exilic Judaism and early Christianity. First of all, the Persian dualistic worldview could offer an explanation on the matter of righteous suffering by means of the dualistic worldview of God and Devil and of good angels and evil demons, whereas there was no way to explain the innocent suffering within Jewish tradition. The presence of the evil forces allows a sufferer to shift blame for evil from self or God to the Devil and Devil's followers. Riley states, "A great deal of Old Testament literature is an effort to defend the view that God is righteous against the apparent contradictions of the sufferings of Israel.... After the Exile and the encounter with Zoroastrian dualism, that evil was understood to be caused by the Devil."²³ Because evils in the world are originated from the cosmic opponent of God God could be exonerated from the blame of the source of evil and suffering. Second, the tension between God and Devil and between righteous angels and wicked demons gives existential and

²². Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 29.

²³. Riley, *River of God*, 116.

practical responses to the problem of evil. In this dualistic worldview, human existence is understood as life between two opposing forces of good and evil.²⁴ A faithful believer was demanded to choose good out of evil in order to be a part of divine life.

However, dualism between God and Devil could not fully offer a logical rationale for the origin of Devil. The controversial dichotomy of the origin of Devil has made a constant tension between God's sovereignty and God's benevolence in biblical scriptures and thereafter. Although Zoroastrianism introduced the concept of Devil in postexilic Judaism and early Christianity in order to explain the occurrences of evil, the essential problem is that the Devil is also a creature who had fallen away from the heaven, and this fall was also initially destined by the true one God of all.²⁵ Since the early Christianity could not provide clear explanation on the origin of the Devil, there has been a constant impasse on the relationship between God's universal sovereignty and Devil's reality in respect to human suffering.

The Positive Role of Suffering in Early Christianity

Similar to the experience of the Babylonian exile that demanded for Israelites a new understanding of suffering, the suffering and death of

²⁴. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 207.

²⁵. David Ray Griffin, *Evil Revisited* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 13.

Jesus and the persecution of followers due to their loyalty to Jesus claimed for Christians a proper understanding on suffering. The Roman's persecution toward early Christians are rooted on various misinformed rumors and political reasons such as cannibalism of eating a murdered baby, incestuous immorality, treason of provoking political instability, and the political scapegoat for public disasters.²⁶ In the middle of the persecution, followers of Jesus did not avoid the threat of death because they thought that persecution was not a disaster but a glorious victory. The early Christians confronted the pressure of persecution to be venerable martyrs.

A positive understanding of suffering in early Christianity is a sheer shift from a dominant traditional understanding of suffering as retribution in the early Judaism. New Testament clearly rejects the doctrine of retribution, which *always* tends to connect sins to suffering. In the gospel of John, for example, Jesus says that a man born blind from birth does not suffer due to sins caused by either himself or his parents (John 9:3). As in the Beatitudes, the ones who are blessed are those who are persecuted for righteous causes (Matt. 5:10-11). In an evil world, the ones who appear to be successful often become the evil ones who took their reward unjustly.²⁷

²⁶. See, Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 182-94.

²⁷. Daniel J. Simundson, "Suffering," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, vol. 6 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 224.

In other words, suffering in early Christianity was the sign that you are one of the faithful rather than one of the wicked attributed to sinful life.²⁸ Since Jesus died for the righteous cause that is the will of God, the followers of Jesus suffered and died with courage imitating Jesus' life.

The basic description of Jesus' life and work in early Christianity was not primarily drawn from traditional Judaism but from Hellenism. The description of Jesus' life and work is closely related to the outline of the ideals in Greco-Roman world. In particular, the basic pattern of the story of Jesus in the gospels is found in the story of heroes of the Greco-Roman literature. The hub story line of Jesus is the outline of the career of a hero. In other words, the story of Greek heroes became a typical paradigm for early Christianity in its understanding of the life and work of Jesus. Riley states, "For those who heard the story of Jesus in the ancient world, whichever doctrinal form it came to them in, Jesus was a hero."²⁹ Like the lives of heroes, Jesus' life shows great courage to confront all kinds of affliction fighting against evil spirits. The story of Jesus is the story of Son of God, who suffered and died for God's will; later, Jesus resurrected from death and ascended to the heaven; He also provided the same kinds of resurrection and immortality to his followers.³⁰ These descriptions of Jesus'

²⁸. Simundson, "Suffering," 224.

²⁹. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 14.

³⁰. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 14.

life and work are identical with the depictions of the career of a Greek hero. However, biblical writers describe Jesus as exceptional and far superior to other Roman heroic characters such as Heracles, Asclepius, or Dionysus. Since gospel writers were educated through the Greco-Roman institution for a long time, they naturally took advantage of the storyline of a heroic tradition in their depiction of Jesus' life. Riley explains, "The pattern of the life of the hero was almost the only story line available and the only story with wide acceptance for serious literature in the Greco-Roman tradition."³¹ After all, the heroic stories essentially became the foundation for the Gospel story. Accordingly, the positive understanding of suffering in early Christianity can be found an important clue in the heroic tradition in Hellenism.

Heroes, who are progenitors of gods and human beings, possess "divine greatness" and "human suffering" at the same time.³² Typical codes of describing the heroic life are tragic fate and enduring suffering for fame. Behind the tragic lives of heroes are fate and the jealousies of ambiguous gods, which are the factors of governing the world in Greco-Roman world. Greek heroes sought to show fame in the middle of suffering. Riley explains, "The word in Greek for fame is *kleos*, and to win

³¹. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 19.

³². Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 57.

unwilling *kleos* was the ideal of every worthy epic character."³³ Heroes suffered and died in the middle of affliction, while showing exceptional courage of their characters.³⁴ The value of heroic life is determined in relation to the obedience to *dike*—justice.³⁵ The heroic figure for *dike* had a revolutionary factor that stands against unjust authorities. Riley states, "[T]he hero is a subversive element, refusing to be subject to the unjust dictates of authority or in some way standing as a symbol of the abuse of power by the unrighteous."³⁶ Showing courage and great performance, heroes made a choice of suffering for *dike* with fame between the choices of a brave death and a shameful life.

The similarity between the pattern of Jesus' life and the prototype of a heroic life offers the idea that the suffering and death of Jesus can be well understood from the Greco-Roman heroic perspective. Like a hero, Jesus descended from heaven, suffered, died, and finally ascended. Jesus understood his suffering and death on the cross as the will of God and lived in obedience to God's will. The destinies and fates of the world are interwoven together in the story of Jesus. For instance, the Gospel of Mark indicates that Jesus must confront his fate of suffering and tragic

³³. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 38.

³⁴. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 15.

³⁵. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 36.

³⁶. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 50.

death. Although gospel writers depict that Jesus had power to change the course of events, but he did not oppose the destiny of life and went to death with honor. Jesus' unjust suffering and his willingness to the death shows that Jesus is Son of God, the real hero.

The ideal life of heroes also became the model for the life of the ideal Christian as well of the basis for understanding the life of Jesus. An ideal life in Greco-Roman world was to imitate and follow the life of a tragic hero for justice with fame. In other words, the life pattern of a hero offered a role model for behaviors among ancients in general. Ancient people in Greco-Roman world imitated heroes from their daily lives to the moments of their deaths.³⁷ Riley explains, "This choice to die for principle and with honor became one of the most famous heroic events to be imitated in the entire tradition. Many historical individuals, when faced with a choice between what would clearly lead to their own deaths and some safe but ignominious alternative, made a similar choice: death with honor over life and disgrace."³⁸ The ancients taught each other facing suffering and death in the midst of callous life through the stories of the heroes. Likewise, leaders in early Christianity challenged followers to imitate their real hero Jesus, and these followers acted like heroes.³⁹ The early Christian leaders

³⁷. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 14.

³⁸. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 47.

³⁹. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 198.

encouraged heroic behaviors in the face of persecution and death.⁴⁰ The inner mentality of enduring persecution is for early Christians to imitate the life of Jesus because they thought that suffering death is not the termination but a linkage to lead immortality.

The disciples of Jesus followed him through death into immortal life. The story of Jesus as a real hero is intermingled with the Zoroastrian dualistic understanding of body and soul and material world and spiritual world. According to a dualistic worldview, physical body is not real person, and earthly life is not genuine life. Rather, spiritual soul is real one, and the life after death is real life. Jesus and his followers proclaimed against a materialistic understanding of religious value, an external ritual performance, and a political conception of the kingdom of God.⁴¹ They declared "a message of the salvation of souls, of resurrection and eternal life."⁴² The ideal life of the followers was to enrich the best value of the soul. Early Christians convinced that they could be completely immortal and that they could live forever in spite of the physical death. Simundson states, "[T]hey (early Christian writers) should be assured that no matter how severe they are treated by this life, the promise of resurrection is there for them. If Jesus rose from the dead, then surely the followers of Christ will

⁴⁰. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 200.

⁴¹. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 194.

⁴². Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 193.

also be raised into a wonderful new existence where Jesus has defeated all enemies (1 Corinthians 15)."⁴³ Following Jesus' life and dualistic worldview, early Christians pursued the very life pattern of Jesus and became heroes with the promise of immortality. Jesus was the hero who secured the means of salvation for followers. To become a Christian, one had only to follow Jesus and then be faithful to the end in order to obtain the reward of genuine eternal life. The Christians encouraged each other to die for the confession, while looking forward to eternal life instead of shrinking back in disobedience.

In heroic understanding of suffering, one of important ideas is *patheimathos*, which means that "learning comes through suffering."⁴⁴ In early Christianity, suffering has a positive role of education, which can be described by the Greek word *paideia*. *Paideia* implies the education of the soul. Suffering is a kind of discipline, "sent by God to make us better persons, just as earthly fathers sometimes must discipline their sons."⁴⁵ Although Jesus was the Son of God, he learned obedience through suffering.⁴⁶ Thus, it was possible for early Christians to rejoice in suffering with the belief that it will produce endurance, character, and hope. As

⁴³. Simundson, "Suffering," 224.

⁴⁴. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 87.

⁴⁵. Simundson, "Suffering," 224.

⁴⁶. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 201.

Paul says, the experience of suffering is an indispensable condition for glorification and offers the lessons of the soul (Rom 8:17-18). Martyrdom was a favor from God, which is a beneficent opportunity for atonement and purification. The account of the sufferings of martyrdom as a divine favor and discipline could lessen the pressure of persecution for early Christians.

Since Jesus was the leader and the model for early Christianity, following the life pattern of Jesus, even unto death, was the ideal life for early Christians. Riley states, "To become a Christian one had only to follow the leader and then be faithful to the end to inherit the promise of eternal life."⁴⁷ The promise of Jesus was eternal life, which is based on the dualism of body and soul. The spiritual presence of Jesus inspired many Christians to imitate Jesus with faithful courage in the face of persecution. The early Christians took up their crosses and suffered for the sake of God's will (Luke 9:23). Like Jesus suffered and died for others, the followers of Jesus were willing to suffer and to die for others and the will of God pursuing immortality.⁴⁸

⁴⁷. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 97.

⁴⁸. Simundson, "Suffering," 225.

The Doctrine of *Creatio ex Nihilo* and the Suffering of the World
in Early Christianity

The doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* is a common belief in the present Christian community. Since God's creation story is in the beginning of the Scriptures, it is a widespread presupposition that the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* is originated from ancient Israel. However, authors of the Hebrew Bible did not propose *creatio ex nihilo*, and writers in the ancient Hebrew period did not consider the concept of *creatio ex nihilo* in a cosmological sense, as later scholars distinguish creation out of absolute nothingness from creation out of chaos that is equivalent to disordered preexistent matter. In fact, the Priestly tradition, which contains the creation story of the Genesis, does not say *creatio ex nihilo*. On the contrary, the term *chaos* in the creation story supports the notion that primeval material already existed before God's creation of the world.

The doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* did not originate from Judaism or primitive Christianity. It is a byproduct of controversial philosophical discourses in the 2nd century of the Christian community. Although Hellenistic Jews used the phrase *creatio ex nihilo*, it does not imply creation out of absolute nothingness. Gerhard May states, "It is true that Hellenistic Jews could talk of a creation by God 'out of nothing', but the formula was demonstrably not meant in an ontological sense and in no

way excluded the acceptance of an eternal material for the world."⁴⁹ The *creatio ex nihilo* that first appeared in 2 Maccabees (between 2 BCE and 1 BCE) merely proclaims God's sovereignty over the world.⁵⁰ It does not consider whether God created the world from absolute nothingness or preexistent material. Philo (20 BCE – 50 CE), the most well known philosopher in the Hellenistic Jewish society, frequently uses the phrase *creatio ex nihilo*, but it is also beyond his inquiry whether the world was created from absolute nothing or preexistent material. In fact, Philo cannot consider God's creation of material, since he understood matter as the causes of evil. Assuming that God created material makes, for Philo, God the source of all evils in the world. Following Platonism, Philo understands that God and the pre-existent material co-exist everlastingly. God is like a supreme artist or conductor who orders and forms the world out of disordered chaos for the purpose of beauty and order of the universe. Like Hellenistic Judaism, primitive Christianity often utilizes the phrase *creatio ex nihilo*. However, it is purely a general affirmation of God's sovereignty. May explains, "The How of the creation did not yet

⁴⁹. Gehard May, *Creatio ex Nihilo*, trans. A. S. Worrall (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), xi.

⁵⁰. 2 Maccabees 7: 28 says, "I beseech you, my child, to look at the heaven and the earth and see everything that is in them, and recognize that God did not make them out of things that existed." In *The Apocrypha of the Old Testament*, Rev. standard version. ed. Bruce M. Metzger (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965). See also May, *Creatio ex Nihilo*, 8.

pose a problem for primitive Christianity; therefore nowhere in the New Testament is the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* explicitly developed as cosmological theory."⁵¹ It is true that the writings in early Christianity sometimes show the expression of *creatio ex nihilo*, but it is a totally different question, as modern scholars understand it a metaphysical question. There is no further philosophical attempt on the belief in creation in primitive Christianity, excepting only affirming God's sovereignty of the universe.

The ideas of *creatio ex nihilo* and *creatio ex chaos* are externally related to the question of the origin of the universe, i.e., cosmogony. However, these ideas on the creation of the world are internally related to the notion of God's sovereignty and the problem of suffering in the world. Apologists, who proclaim the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, closely connect the notion of *creatio ex nihilo* to the belief in the omnipotent God. While maintaining *creatio ex nihilo*, apologists and traditional theists are actually concerned the notion that the omnipotent power of God cannot be sustained, if one denies the idea of *creatio ex nihilo*. In other words, the motivation that underlies the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* is the attempt to justify the absolute sovereignty and unlimited freedom of God. Apologists and traditional theists believed that the denial of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* could diminish the image of the omnipotent power of God. On

⁵¹. May, *Creatio ex Nihilo*, 26.

the other hand, advocates of the idea of *creatio ex chaos* mainly inquire about a plausible understanding of suffering and evil in the world. If God is the only source of the universe, God could be the author of the bad as well as the source of the good. An effort of grasping a proper understanding between the creation theory and the world suffering becomes a major issue in the middle of 2nd century of Christianity. In particular, Gnostic Christian thinkers in this period seek to explain how and why the world experiences the suffering and disaster. In other words, the issue of creation out of nothing or out of chaos becomes the problem of evil and suffering to Gnostic Christian thinkers of the 2nd century.⁵²

In general, Gnostic thinkers believed that the genuine good God did not create the world because the material world is inimical. While explaining Gnostic worldview, May states, "The world is seen so negatively that one can no longer attribute its origin to a creative act of the true, the highest God."⁵³ The majority of Gnostic thinkers distinguished the true God from the Demiurge, the creator of the physical world. Gnostic thinkers generally understood that the true God created the spiritual world, whereas the Demiurge created the material world.

Marcion, a radical Gnostic thinker, proclaims *creatio ex chaos*. He drastically distinguishes the genuine supreme God of redeemer from the

⁵². May, *Creatio ex Nihilo*, 41.

⁵³. May, *Creatio ex Nihilo*, 41.

inferior Demiurge of creator. They co-exist from eternity. The earthly world did not come from God the redeemer, but from God the creator. The Demiurge cannot be the true God because he is the one who created the evil matter and the evil world. May explains, "For Marcion, the creation of the world out of evil matter proves the imperfection and lowly status of the demiurge. A God who uses this material cannot be the true God... [T]he true God had created the invisible heavenly world above the heaven of the demiurge."⁵⁴ Although the Demiurge is not evil in itself, the Demiurge created the world out of preexistent matter, which is essentially evil. Following middle Platonism, the designation of matter as evil gives a Marcionic justification on the problem of suffering and evil in the world.

Interestingly enough, Basilides, a Christian Gnostic thinker, is the first advocate of *creatio ex nihilo* in a genuine philosophical sense. He ascertains that God created the "cosmic seed"⁵⁵ out of absolute nothingness. The cosmic seed that contains everything in potential, would be realized according to the process of history. Unlike other Gnostic thinkers, Basilides understands that the creation of the world is due to the will and plan of the genuine one God. He rejects the creation out of chaos because it is anthropomorphic and limits the sovereignty of God. However, Basilides does not propose any proper explanation of the origin

⁵⁴. May, *Creatio ex Nihilo*, 57-58.

⁵⁵. May, *Creatio ex Nihilo*, 68.

of evil and suffering. The evil is simply taken for granted without clarification. May states, "Basilides' teaching about the *pronoia*, which determines everything that happens in the world, was maintained by Basilides in the face of persecution and martyrdom."⁵⁶ Although Basilides presents that suffering is a punishment for sins, he also understands suffering as "an honorable opportunity for atonement," which is "a favor from God."⁵⁷

On the other hand, Valentinus says that Sophia, who generates the demiurge, made the world out of chaos. God produces the *pleroma* according to God's benevolent will. Matter is not created by God's act, but by the fall of Sophia.⁵⁸ At first, Sophia forms the demiurge who becomes the ruler of the world, and Sophia creates through the demiurge the heaven and the earth. The demiurge separated and put in order the primitive material that was a state of chaotic mixture. Valentinus understood that the world created by given material that was "a state of chaotic mixture."⁵⁹

Some Christian scholars of 2nd Century, such as Justin, Athenagoras, and Hermogenes attempt to connect Christian belief and Platonic

⁵⁶. May, *Creatio ex Nihilo*, 81.

⁵⁷. May, *Creatio ex Nihilo*, 81-82.

⁵⁸. May, *Creatio ex Nihilo*, 110.

⁵⁹. May, *Creatio ex Nihilo*, 106.

cosmology. So-called Christian Platonists insist that there is no contradiction in maintaining the unlimited freedom of the omnipotent God and the creation out of preexistent material at the same time. Justin, an anti-Marcionite, proclaims the creation of the world from formless matter. Unlike middle Platonists, he does not understand that the evil is originated from matter. Justin considers that the uncreated matter does not restrict God's sovereignty. The eternal material simply functions to explicate "how the creation of the world was possible."⁶⁰ Whereas Justin affirms unlimited omnipotent God, he understands that creation is the forming process of an unordered material. Athenagoras also understands the creation of the world as the shaping of the preexistent matter. He contrasts "the process of creation with the shaping of clay by the potter," saying that clay already existed before creation.⁶¹ Athenagoras understands that the devil and devil's followers were originally created by God to rule over the matter world, as the angels were created by God to guard spiritual world; on the other hand, God governs the whole world.⁶² However, he does not propose matter as the ground of evil. For him, evil is attributed to the misuse of the freedom of creatures. Hermogenes expressly says that God created the world out of unformed matter. He

⁶⁰. May, *Creatio ex Nihilo*, 124-25.

⁶¹. May, *Creatio ex Nihilo*, 139.

⁶². May, *Creatio ex Nihilo*, 139.

"holds firmly to the unity of God in the [middle] Platonist manner, and understands uncreated matter as the ground of evil."⁶³ Hermogenes comprehends "matter as an evil principle alongside God."⁶⁴ Although evil is originated from matter, he thinks that matter itself is neutral. It does not contain negative or positive value. If matter is evil, Hermogenes argues, "God would have been unable to create anything out of it."⁶⁵

In the middle of the 2nd century the idea of *creatio ex nihilo* begins to be a church doctrine. Apologetic Christian thinkers such as Tatian, Theophilus, and Irenaeus, proclaim that the omnipotent God creates matter out of absolute nothing. Tatian is the first Christian scholar who officially states that God directly produced matter. For the sake of the sovereignty of God, he claims that one should consider God's creation of matter.⁶⁶ Theophilus also says that God created everything out of absolute nothingness. If both God and matter are unoriginate, he argues, God cannot be the creator of everything.⁶⁷ It is Irenaeus who first made a dominant manipulation of the idea of *creatio ex nihilo*. From him, the traditional church was widely accepted this idea, and *creatio ex nihilo*

⁶³. May, *Creatio ex Nihilo*, 140.

⁶⁴. May, *Creatio ex Nihilo*, 141.

⁶⁵. May, *Creatio ex Nihilo*, 142.

⁶⁶. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 152.

⁶⁷. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 160.

became one of the major church dogmas. May explains, "The majestic handling of the idea of God's free, historical activity is an essential theological achievement of Irenaeus."⁶⁸ God does not need preexistent material because God is self-sufficient. God contains everything and gives existence to everything.⁶⁹ God should control and govern everything in the universe. For Irenaeus, God is the one almighty Creator. In relation to the evil factors of the world, Irenaeus understands that God created the world through God's free decision, but "God wanted to have an opposite number to whom he could show his benevolence."⁷⁰ The fundamental problem of Irenaeus's idea on evil is that God should be responsible for the evil as well as the good. Although church theologians ardently proclaimed the omnipotence and freedom of God in history, the problem of suffering and evil still remained to be properly unsolved.

In the philosophical field, the term chaos implies the disordered preexistent material. On the other hand, in the ancient combat myth, chaos is a personified primeval opponent, which reflects the state of disorder and the suffering of the society. In other words, whereas the idea of chaos in the philosophical sense is value-free, the conception of chaos in the ancient combat myth is negative. In the story of combat myth, the

⁶⁸. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 174.

⁶⁹. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 165.

⁷⁰. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 176.

creation story is related to the appearance of a stable society in divine order and harmony. While emphasizing the close relationship between the creation story and the suffering of the society, Levinson makes a critique saying, "Two and a half millennia of Western theology have made it easy to forget that throughout the ancient Near Eastern world, including Israel, the point of creation is not the production of matter out of nothing, but rather the emergence of a stable community in a benevolent and life-sustaining order."⁷¹ In other words, the creation story is a projection of an ordered environment and security against chaos and disorder in the society.

The dilemma in any society is that the perfectly ordered society is not the present one. Thus, authors of Scriptures depict the creation story not only as a past event of prehistory, but also as a gradual process that brings order out of chaos. For example, the Priestly creation story in Genesis 1-3 does not depict God's creation as the complete one; rather, it is ongoing process. The creation story is about the control of the evil and suffering, not about the removal of evil and suffering.⁷² In other words, God's creation is a process of separation making in which the evil forces are overcome. The New Year festival, the temple, the tabernacle, and the Sabbath correspond to this continuing process of creation for the ordered

⁷¹. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 12.

⁷². Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 127.

society. Levinson states, "New Years, festival must be seen not simply as a celebration of a calendrical milestone, but as an actual renewal or re-creation of the ordered world."⁷³ The effective remembrances of the primordial creation story offered hope and desire for God's ordered society in the middle of suffering.

God's creation is ongoing, and God's final victory lies in the future. God's definitive victory is promised in the end of the world. God's power to conquer the adversary and to establish order is unquestioned in the Scriptures, although the reality of the evil power is still active at present. Levinson explains, "In the case of creation through combat, the survival of the possibility of the return to chaos is more unqualified. The Sea is not always described as destroyed, hacked to pieces, never to rise again. On the contrary, often the waters of chaos are presented as surviving, only within the bounds that define creation."⁷⁴ The issue is that there is a gap between the declaration of Yahweh's sovereignty and the present evil and suffering in reality. The present is not fair and requires of various modifications because social, political, and natural chaos is still prevalent.⁷⁵ In reality, evil power is dominant, obedience to Yahweh is

⁷³. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 68-69.

⁷⁴. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 14.

⁷⁵. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 69.

unpaid, and faith seems to be no use.⁷⁶ In other words, God's sovereignty of the world is a confession of faith rather than widespread experienced events. Between creation and chaos there is neither human righteousness nor God's omnipotent power, but only God's promise.⁷⁷

The creation story and the eternal promise are two ways of understanding the affliction of the world in the Scriptures. Whereas creation means making chaos into order, God's covenantal promise guarantees eternal victory against the evil.⁷⁸ Covenant between God and human beings require the essential commitment of people to perform God's commands. Levinson states, "[T]he priestly cosmogony, presents creation as an event ordered toward the rest of God, with which it closes, a rest that signifies an act of redemption and social reform and an opportunity for human participation in the sublime quietude of the unopposed creator God."⁷⁹ God's ordering of the world is closely related to the dedication of human beings. Only through the human affiliation with God, the ordered society would be fully realized in this world.⁸⁰

⁷⁶. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 90.

⁷⁷. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 14.

⁷⁸. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 22.

⁷⁹. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 119.

⁸⁰. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 58.

Human participation is in need of the divine ordering of the world.⁸¹ Order is partly a function of the free self-subordination of human beings to the God who is continually against the persistent forces of destruction.

The Eschatological Answer for the Problem of Evil in Early Christianity

It is a delicate issue for biblical scholars whether the ancient Israel has an independent eschatology or not. Some biblical scholars maintain that the Hebrew tradition has an independent eschatological worldview, whereas others declare that there is no genuine eschatology in Hebrew Scriptures. This controversy basically comes from how one defines the term eschatology. The word eschatology originated from the Greek term *eschatos*, which literally means last or final.⁸² Broadly speaking, it includes a momentous time of future, which implies fundamentally different stage contrast to the past. Strictly speaking, eschatology refers to the ideas about the end of history and the total transformation of the world. In the Hebrew Scriptures written before the Babylonian exile, it is not possible to find eschatological vision in this narrow sense, which presupposes the ultimate universal battle between God and Devil in the eschaton and final apocalyptic judgment of God.

⁸¹. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 91.

⁸². David L. Petersen, "Eschatology: Old Testament," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2: 575.

As a broad generalization, however, it is possible to address the development of an eschatological tradition in ancient Israel. David L. Petersen states, "If by eschatology one means a form of radical orientation to the future, which may involve a sort of social and/or cosmic arrangement fundamentally different from that which currently exists, then it is possible to speak about the development of an eschatological tradition complex in ancient Israel."⁸³ The three preliminary sources of the eschatological tradition in ancient Israel are patriarchal promise tradition, Sinai covenant tradition, and David-Zion tradition. These traditions have apparent future anticipations and were later embedded in the thought of prophetic eschatology. Although prophetic writings do not declare the end of history, they proclaim a new beginning of the future.⁸⁴ After the exile, apocalyptic eschatology, the typical eschatological worldview in the Hebrew Scriptures, was introduced to Israel. Levenson states, "Apocalyptic is, in large part, born of the contradiction between the rhetoric of the First Temple period and the reality of the Second."⁸⁵ Whereas prophetic eschatology fundamentally has an optimistic worldview that Yahweh would convert the world by restoring the initial

⁸³. Petersen, "Eschatology: Old Testament," 576.

⁸⁴. George W. E. Nickelsburg, "Eschatology—Early Jewish Literature," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2: 580.

⁸⁵. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 32.

ideal condition, apocalyptic eschatology has a pessimistic worldview, which presupposes that ideal future is always connected to the future doom.⁸⁶ According to apocalyptic worldview, the world would not be amended or redeemed because the evil of the world is too severe. Only through the total destruction of the world, would an ideal society governed by God be established.

Although the eschatology of the Hebrew Scriptures is future oriented, the eschatological expectations of the Hebrew Scriptures are basically this-world oriented such as return from exile, the restoration of the Davidic monarchy, or the rebuilding of Jerusalem temple. These eschatological beliefs also contain "proper administration of justice, fertility for the land, and the lack of military confrontation."⁸⁷ D. E. Aune states, "Since the focus of eschatological salvation is upon a transformed society living in an ideal environment, the earliest and most persistent forms of Jewish eschatology have a marked temporal and materialistic focus."⁸⁸ On the other hand, early Christianity rejects this materialistic Jewish eschatological view and spiritualizes the ideas of the temple, the

⁸⁶. D. E. Aune, "Early Christian Eschatology," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2: 595.

⁸⁷. Petersen, "Eschatology: Old Testament," 579.

⁸⁸. Aune, "Early Christian Eschatology," 595.

Jerusalem, and the Israel.⁸⁹ Aune explains, "Since the mythical imagery and motifs of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology were drawn from the ancient *national* mythical traditions of creation and kingship, the separation of Christianity from Judaism also entailed separation from the mythical traditions which defined the Jewish national identity."⁹⁰ The conception of cosmic eschatology in early Christianity changed religious thoughts from the materialistic worldview to a spiritual worldview. Riley states, "Jesus was indeed a king, but in the spiritual kingdom of God; he was indeed a prophet, not of the Law but of the mysteries of God hidden from the wise and powerful; and he was a warrior, but against the Devil and the world forces of darkness."⁹¹ Early Christians took advantage of the apocalyptic idea to understand how Jesus would someday return to complete the final victory against the evil powers. Based on the dualistic worldview, Christian apocalyptic eschatology focuses on soul tours of heaven and hell in which the eternal states of the righteous and the wicked are the outcome for present behaviors.

Eschatological beliefs in early Christianity were connected to the imminent expectation of the end of the world. As in the case of Mark and Q, Jesus proclaims the imminent future arrival of the kingdom of God. The

⁸⁹. Aune, "Early Christian Eschatology," 595.

⁹⁰. Aune, "Early Christian Eschatology," 598.

⁹¹. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 27.

idea of imminent arrival of the end is somewhat rooted in the Greco-Roman worldview. The Stoic philosophers understand that the world is composed of the eternal successions of cosmic cycles, and specific momentous events of the world alter these world cycles. Plato also teaches that civilization would be periodically annihilated and would be remade subsequently, although he understands that the cosmos would be everlasting. In Greek society, the Great Year that implies the beginning of a new cycle was a common idea.⁹² Along with the idea of periodic beginning and end, in *Hesiod*, the current human world that is almost entirely evil is supposed to come across imminent doom. This condemnation of the world is originally decided by the fate and Greek gods, and there is no way to alter the destiny of the world. In other words, the designed end of history in *Hesiod* is beyond human power. The imminence of final divine judgment is due to the overflow of cruelties and crimes in the world. In the middle of the imminent end of the world, however, there was an expectation of hope for the righteous people.

The imminent arrival of the end of the world in *Hesiod* influenced to the eschatological conception in early Christianity. Riley states, "The tale of the Four ages is clearly an early expression of what would become in Jesus' day the eschatological expectation of final judgment so important

⁹². Aune, "Early Christian Eschatology," 599.

in the New Testament."⁹³ Early Palestinian Christianity lived in the imminent expectation of the return of Jesus who offers salvation and executes the judgment between good and evil. However, the delay of the *parousia*, which means the second coming of Jesus, has made a severe problem in early Christianity and has tried to propose a proper answer for it. Aune states, "In the view of many scholars, the *delay of the Parousia* was the single most important factor for the transformation of early Christian eschatology from an emphasis on the *imminent* expectation of the end to a vague expectation set in the more distant future."⁹⁴ In order to give an answer for the delay of the *parousia*, Luke converts the eschatological time from the end of the world to the end of personal life.⁹⁵ On the other hand, the gospel of John explains the delay of *parousia* presenting the realized eschatology, which refers to the realization in present experience of the eschatological future. Paul also expected that the *parousia* of Jesus would arrive in the near future and had already begun. Paul understood the period between Jesus' resurrection and the *parousia* as an interim period, while emphasizing the close relationship between eschatological languages and moral behaviors.

⁹³. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 35-36.

⁹⁴. Aune, "Early Christian Eschatology," 606.

⁹⁵. Aune, "Early Christian Eschatology," 605.

The most important impact on the eschatology in postexilic Judaism and early Christianity is the dualism of Zoroastrianism in Persia. The Hebrew Scriptures does not present the apocalyptic eschatology before the experience of the exile, in which Israelites encounter Persian philosophical and religious thought. In monistic worldview of traditional Judaism, the history of the world has no reason to anticipate apocalyptic judgment or the end of the world. It is the Persians dualism that introduces in postexilic Israel and Early Christianity various concepts of "righteous angels and wicked demons, the judgment of dead, heaven and hell, the resurrection, eternal life, and an eschatology of the coming end of the world."⁹⁶ The dualistic worldview between God and Devil presumes the final battle between the forces of good and the forces of evil. Riley states, "As a consequence of these dualistic ideas, the concept of history changed dramatically-time itself was seen to be moving forward toward its appointed end and the final defeat of the forces of evil and vindication of the righteous."⁹⁷ Devil and his followers will be defeated completely on the end of the world. The existing world will be disappeared, and a new world will be created for the resurrected righteous. Accordingly, all events

⁹⁶. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 26.

⁹⁷. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*, 27.

in the world become elements of the cosmic drama, which leads to the climax of God's ultimate triumph and Devil's final annihilation.⁹⁸

The essential distinctiveness of apocalyptic eschatology in early Christianity is that the end of evil comes not within human history, but it arrives beyond history through the sovereignty of God. Levenson states, "The evil that occurs in history is symptomatic of a larger suprahistorical disequilibrium that requires, indeed invites, a suprahistorical correction."⁹⁹ Since the evil did not start with history, it will not disappear in history; rather, it will be removed beyond history.¹⁰⁰ The new world will bring the universal, permanent eradication of evil and the eternal sovereignty of God. This dualistic eschatology considerably changed the concept of history in early Christianity. History moves toward the predestined end, the final end of the evil, and vindication of the righteous.

The central focus of the eschatological vision in Early Christianity is the final judgment of the evil and the salvation of the righteous people.¹⁰¹ The eschatological future presentation reflects the present reality of the suffering world and offers a final answer for the suffering people. It is clear that there is a close connection between eschatological worldview and

⁹⁸. Riley, *River of God*, 95.

⁹⁹. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 50.

¹⁰⁰. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 50.

¹⁰¹. Aune, "Early Christian Eschatology," 594.

the suffering situations of people. Aune states, "Since the emphasis on the imminent expectation of the end is often *increased* in settings of adverse social, economic, and political experience and *decreased* during periods of relative peace and prosperity, it is clear that eschatology had an important social and religious function in ancient Judaism and Christianity."¹⁰² Eschatology presents social and cosmic upheaval fundamentally different from the current situation. Thus, the eschatological scheme always pertains pressure between the present and future. The attitudes of early Christianity about the future are bound up with a negative appraisal of the present. Levenson states, "The world order that creation denotes is not the present one in which evil is triumphant, obedience is unrewarded, and faith seems discredited, but the future one dawning just now, in which God will vanquish his foes, repair and mount his long dilapidated throne, and reward his band of faithful and obedient servants."¹⁰³ The justice of God is absent, and the perfect world order is not in the present. The eschatological quality of life in the community does not eliminate the reality of evil in the present. The respective rewards and punishments lie in the future. In the middle of suffering situation, early Christians believed that divine judgment would reverse present unjust conditions. They await the inevitable intervention of

¹⁰². Aune, "Early Christian Eschatology," 594.

¹⁰³. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 90.

the righteous God, who will judge the current wrongs and the forces of evil. At the time of the judgment, those who have been chosen will be purified, and the forces of evil will be definitively annihilated. Justice will finally be done, and those who suffer unjustly will be vindicated in the end of the day.¹⁰⁴ Up to the eschaton, the battle between good and evil continues.

¹⁰⁴. Nickelsburg, "Eschatology—Early Jewish Literature," 592.

CHAPTER 3

WHITEHEAD'S CONCEPTIONS ON THE PROBLEM OF EVIL AND SUFFERING

The Position of Evil and Suffering in Whitehead's Metaphysical System

Alfred North Whitehead's fundamental metaphysical concern is not to propose a plausible elucidation for the problem of evil and suffering in the world. Mentioned in *Process and Reality*, Whitehead's metaphysical scheme is primarily to construct a coherent, logical, and necessary understanding on the universal process of the world.¹ Whitehead states, "The lectures are intended to state a condensed scheme of cosmological ideas, to develop their meaning by confrontation with the various topics of experience, and finally to elaborate an adequate cosmology in terms of which all particular topics find their interconnections."² Appealing to both empiricism and rationalism, Whitehead seeks to propose a relational, non-dualistic cosmology of the process of the universe. Although theodicy does not play a main role in Whitehead's metaphysical system, the negative factors of the universe that offers some tinges of process theodicy are an ingredient of Whitehead's metaphysical system along with the positive factors of the universe.

¹. Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne, corrected ed. (New York: Free Press, 1978), 3.

². Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, xii. The Gifford lectures were delivered at the University of Edinburgh in 1927-1928. These lectures were published with the title *Process and Reality*, and are his most representative philosophical work.

Since Whitehead's philosophy of science proposes an everlasting evolutionary process of the universe based on the progressive evolutionism, people in general can easily assume that Whitehead merely emphasized the positive aspects of the evolutionary process of the universe. Accordingly, some scholars insist that Whitehead presented a naïve optimistic cosmological worldview. However, Whitehead neither proposes an absolute optimistic cosmology nor an absolute pessimistic cosmology. In evolutionary process, the principle of natural selection always contains the elimination of negative elements as well as the adaptation of positive factors according to the environments of actual entities. Whitehead not only acknowledges the positive side of the universal process but also fully recognizes the negative aspect of the universal process. The evolution of the universe is always composed of negative and positive facets of the evolutionary process.

In opposition to absolute optimism and absolute pessimism, Whitehead speaks of "progressive hope" that is blossoming in the middle of the tragedies of the events of the world. Instead of mere presentation of the positive aspects of evolutionary process, Whitehead emphasizes polarities between positive poles and negative poles in the universe. The events of the universe always contain a tension between good and evil. The self-determining power of each actual entity, which is inherited in every actual entity, creates a variation between the degree of good and

the degree of evil. The universe is always open to the future by the real choices of actual entities, although there is a risk that some of those choices may be worse than others. In other words, the process of the universe is "a true migration to uncharted seas of adventure."³ In *Science and the Modern World*, Whitehead uses the term "wandering" in order to explain the necessity of instability. Whitehead states:

Modern science has imposed on humanity the necessity for wandering. Its progressive thought and its progressive technology make the transition through time, from generation to generation, a true migration into uncharted seas of adventure. The very benefit of wandering is that it is dangerous and needs skill to avert evils. We must expect, therefore, that the future will disclose dangers. It is the business of the future to be dangerous.... It must be admitted that there is a degree of instability, which is inconsistent with civilization. But, on the whole, the great ages have been unstable ages.⁴

The adventure toward the future always contains dangerous elements as well as beneficiary factors. However, the "wandering," which implies the instability of the actual entity, does not imply evil in itself. The state of instability is pure possibility between good and evil, and it becomes the ground of possibility of good out of evil. This instability in fact becomes the bedrock of the advance to novelty.

³. According to Whitehead, this phrase refers to the progressive thought and technology of science in a strict sense. However, I contend that applying this phrase to the whole universal process is not far from Whitehead's original idea. See the subsequent quotation.

⁴. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Free Press, 1967), 207.

In *Process and Reality*, Whitehead speaks in detail on the character of instability of the universal process, by introducing the terms, "vagueness" and "chaos." Like the term "wandering," the state of "vagueness" becomes a ground of possibility for good and evil. Whitehead states, "[V]agueness is an essential condition for the narrowness which is one condition for depth of relevance. It enables a background to contribute its relevant quota, and it enables a social group in the foreground to gain concentrated relevance for its community of character."⁵ The state of vagueness not only becomes a prerequisite of harmony but also becomes a provision of relevance. In a similar context in *Process and Reality*, Whitehead also mentions the term "chaos," which is a state of "non-social nexus."⁶ Similar to the conception of vagueness, the state of chaos is a prerequisite for the state of harmony. Whitehead states, "The right chaos and the right vagueness are jointly required for any effective harmony.... [C]haos is not to be identified with evil; for harmony requires the due coordination of chaos, vagueness, narrowness, and width."⁷ The state of chaos is not evil in itself; rather, it is purely neutral, which can be a ground of possibility for good and evil.

⁵. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 112.

⁶. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 110.

⁷. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 112.

Whitehead's notion of *chaos* marks a major difference between process scholars and biblical scholars in their interpretations of the term "*chaos*." Biblical scholars in general understand the state of *chaos* as an emblem of suffering or evil elements that reflect the suffering situation of the society. On the other hand, Whitehead and process thinkers consider *chaos* as a necessary metaphysical condition for harmony, which is neutral in value. For example, Griffin explains the term *chaos* as a metaphysical foundation of the universe in his discussion of the *creatio ex nihilo*. For him, *chaos* is neither good nor bad, although Griffin frequently interacted with biblical scholar Gerhard May who proposes the idea of *creatio ex nihilo*.⁸ On the other hand, biblical scholars such as May and Jon D. Levinson, who propose the idea of *creatio ex chaos*, understand *chaos* as a symbol of suffering.⁹

Whitehead's cosmological worldview proposes the final opposites of joy—sorrow and good—evil. Whitehead states, "In our cosmological construction we are, therefore, left with the final opposites, joy and sorrow,

⁸. David Ray Griffin, "Creation out of Chaos and the Problem of Evil," in *Encountering Evil*, ed. Stephen T. David (Atlanta: GA: John Knox Press, 1981), 101-36.

⁹. Unlike traditional theists who believe in *creatio ex nihilo*, May and Levinson claim that the Scriptures actually proclaim *creatio ex chaos*. Gerhard May, *Creatio ex Nihilo*, trans. A. S. Worrall (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), and Jon D Levinson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). See my Chapter 2, section 3, "The Doctrine of *Creatio ex Nihilo* and the Suffering of the World in Early Christianity."

good and evil, disjunction and conjunction—that is to say, the many in one—flux and permanence, greatness and triviality, freedom and necessity, God and the World.”¹⁰ The two opposite poles between negative factors and positive factors in the universe are composed of the metaphysical principle of the universe.

Metaphysical Principle and the Problem of Theodicy

Whitehead's metaphysical system has a definite theoretical answer about the question why evil exists. According to him, the ultimate reason for the occurrence of evils is attributed to the metaphysical principle. The Metaphysical principle is the fundamental principle that describes how the universe operates. Whitehead defines, “The ultimate metaphysical principle is the advance from disjunction to conjunction, creating a novel entity other than the entities given in disjunction.”¹¹ It is creative process, which disjoined actual entities move toward conjunction with other actual entities creating novel entities. Whitehead affirms that the metaphysical principle is the unchanging fundamental principle of the process of the universe, which governs the activities of all actual entities, including those of human beings and of God. Speaking in traditional Christian languages, the metaphysical principle is the outcome of God's primordial decision,

¹⁰. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 341.

¹¹. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 21.

and this principle also governs the divine activity as well as activities of other actual entities.¹²

Unlike traditional freewill theists, Whitehead does not consider that God's initial decision can be changed by God's arbitrary interruption because the characteristic of God's power is not unilateral or arbitrary. The notion that the metaphysical principle governs God's activity does not mean that God is smaller than the metaphysical principle. The concept of the metaphysical principle and the reality of God cannot be compared with each other. It is because that metaphysical principle belongs to the category of explanations, whereas the reality of God belongs to the category of ontological principles; i.e., the category of being.¹³ The metaphysical principle is simply a means of explanation regarding the activities of actual entities, including those of God.

In *Process and Reality*, Whitehead presents three metaphysical components: one, many, and creativity.¹⁴ According to process metaphysics, there have always been God, actual entities, and creativity.

¹². In relation to the relationship between God and the metaphysical principle, there are two different approaches. On the one hand, Hartshorne and Griffin understand that the metaphysical principle is beyond God's decision. It is the laws of nature that governs every actual entity, including God. On the other hand, Whitehead and Suchocki understand that the metaphysical principle is attributed to God's primordial decision. See, Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 298.

¹³. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 24.

¹⁴. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 21.

The ultimate metaphysical principle of the universal process is "creativity," which is the universal attribute of the actual entity. Whitehead says that creativity is "the universal of universals characterizing ultimate matter of fact."¹⁵ It is "primordial power" and can be called innate freedom.¹⁶ Every actual entity possesses some amount of creativity, although the amount of creativity varies according to the various forms of actual entities.

Creativity has two kinds of power: self-determining power and creative influencing power. The formal is the power "to create or determine itself on the basis of creative influences received from others," and the latter is the power "to be a creative influence on the self-creation or self-determination of subsequent individuals."¹⁷ The power of self-determination is "the power to make a unity out of multiplicity," and the power of efficient causation is "the influence of one being or event upon another."¹⁸ This twofold power shapes the never-ending twofold process of "concrescence" and "transition." The process of concrescence is the process that many become one; on the other hand, the process of transition is the process that one becomes many. Concrescence is the

¹⁵. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 21.

¹⁶. David Ray Griffin, *Evil Revisited* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 22.

¹⁷. Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, 22.

¹⁸. Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, 22.

internal momentary becoming of an actual entity, while transition is the process from one actual entity to another actual entity. Concrecence represents the self-determination or final causation of the process of an actual entity, and transition represents efficient causation to the process of other future entities.¹⁹ In Whitehead's metaphysical system, the process of concrecence and transition occurs in every place and every actuality toward creative advance. Griffin explains, "[T]he very nature of creativity involves incessant oscillation between the one and the many."²⁰ The everlasting process of concrecence and transition toward creativity is the ultimate metaphysical principle that is embodied in the nature of God and the universe. In Whitehead's cosmology, the possibility of evil is rooted in the metaphysical principle that describes the creative process of the actual entity.

According to Whitehead, there are two dimensions of intrinsic evil: discord and unnecessary triviality.²¹ These two dimensions are the opposites of the two criteria of intrinsic good: harmony and intensity. Whereas harmony is a feeling of conformity, discord is a feeling of destruction between one actual entity and other actual entities. Whitehead states, "The nature of evil is that the characters of things are

¹⁹. Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, 22.

²⁰. Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, 23.

²¹. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 282.

mutually obstructive."²² When discord or disharmony takes place between actual entities, a "feeling of mutual destructiveness" appears.²³ Griffin explains, "Discord is evil in an absolute or noncomparative sense. Since discord means some kind of suffering, it is evil in itself, apart from any comparison with that which might have been."²⁴ On the other hand, triviality, the opposite of intensity, is the dimension of boredom, lack of zest and excitement.²⁵ Griffin explains, "Trivial experience is not evil simply because it is trivial; rather, it is evil only if it is more trivial than it has to be."²⁶ In other words, triviality is evil only by comparison with what it could have been. The idea of triviality is based on the idea of the evolutionary process of the universe. Griffin states, "Recognizing that unnecessary triviality is an evil provides a basis for understanding the evolutionary development of our world as manifesting the creative purpose of God."²⁷ The purpose of God's everlasting creation is to lure more inherent value of the actuality out of chaos. This is God's ideal aims toward every actuality.

²². Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 340.

²³. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 256.

²⁴. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 284.

²⁵. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 278.

²⁶. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 285.

²⁷. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 285.

If an actual entity does not fulfill God's ideal aim, it falls into the state of triviality.²⁸

In *Process and Reality* and *Adventures of Ideas*, one of the important conceptions in respect to the problem of evil is "feeling." Whitehead states that the good "resides in the realization of a strength of many feelings fortifying each entity as they meet in the novel unity."²⁹ On the other hand, the evil is located in the conflict of feelings, which deny to each entity into the appropriate expansion.³⁰ God's ultimate creative purpose is that the actual entity is to achieve "the maximum depth of intensity of feeling."³¹ Feeling appears to be either harmony or discord. In other words, the range of appearance of feeling diverges between the extreme beauty and the extreme evil. Griffin states, "While increased complexity overcomes triviality, the result may be anywhere on the scale between the height of beauty, which is intense harmony, and the evil of extreme discord."³² While harmony preserves the importance of the

²⁸. See the diagram Metaphysical Principle and the Problem of Evil, on next page 110.

²⁹. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 275.

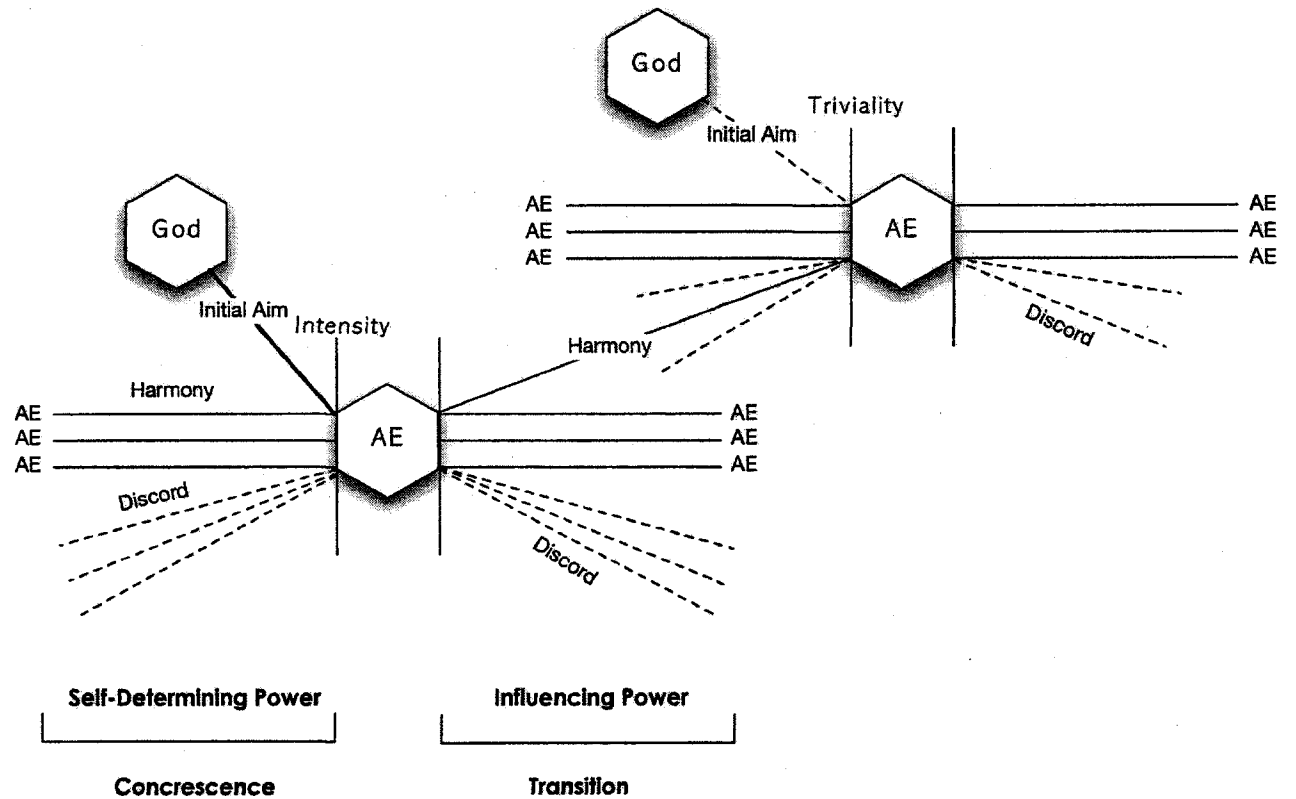
³⁰. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 275.

³¹. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 249.

³². Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 293.

Diagram 1

Metaphysical Principle and the Problem of Evil



actual entity, discord is composed of the destruction of the actual entity. Whitehead states, "When the direct feeling of such destruction dominates the whole, there is the immediate feeling of evil, and the anticipation of destructive or weakened data for the future."³³ Whitehead goes on to say, "This (Discord) is the feeling of evil in the most general sense, namely physical pain or mental evil, such as sorrow, horror, and dislike."³⁴ Because the feeling of discord involves some kinds of concrete affliction, it can be called evil itself. The occurrence of evil is based on the fact that there are possibilities of harmony and discord, which can produce either good or evil.

The feeling of discord, however, does not always play a negative role but often becomes a positive factor for higher perfection. The pursuit for aesthetic value entails experience that contains elements of discord as well as of harmony. If an actual entity experiences the feeling of discord, it is alienated from perfection. Whitehead calls this kind of imperfection "aesthetic destruction."³⁵ The feeling of aesthetic destruction is attributed to "discordant feeling."³⁶ Discordant feeling is produced, when actual entities are objectively discordant. Whitehead states, "The more intense

³³. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 263.

³⁴. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 256.

³⁵. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 257.

³⁶. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 257.

the discordant feeling, the further the retreat from perfection."³⁷

Perfection excludes discordant feelings, since the feeling of discord is evil itself. However, Whitehead proposes that there are different degrees of perfection such as lower perfection and higher perfection. He says, "There are in fact higher and lower perfections, and an imperfection aiming at a higher type stands above lower perfections."³⁸ For example, imagine that a famous artist finishes drawing a painting on a canvas. Ordinary people redeem that painting an excellent work; however, the artist often tears and throws it away to the floor because he is not fully satisfied with the painting. This artist's action shows an effort for higher perfection *vis a vis* lower perfection. Whitehead states, "[A]ny system of things, which in any wide sense is beautiful, is to that extent justified in its existence. It may however fail in another sense, by inhibiting more Beauty than it creates. Thus the system, though in a sense beautiful, is on the whole evil in that environment."³⁹ Accordingly, the feeling of discord as well as the feeling of harmony becomes a necessary factor for higher beauty and higher perfection.

Aesthetic destruction out of discordant feeling toward higher perfection can be a positive element in the process of the actual entity.

³⁷. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 256.

³⁸. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 257.

³⁹. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 265.

The feeling of discord can be a type of "freshness or hope," or it can be a form of "horror or pain."⁴⁰ Every actuality is finite, so there is no ideal perfection, which means "the infinitude of all perfections."⁴¹ With every new experience, certain values are actualized, but other potential values are not chosen. Thus, various forms of perfections can be discordant among themselves. Whitehead states, "The Discord in the Universe arises from the fact that modes of Beauty are various, and not of necessity compatible. And yet some admixture of Discord is a necessary factor in the transition from mode to mode."⁴² In other words, the feeling of discord sometimes can be a merit toward higher perfection.

The conflict of positive values is at the root of both contingency and tragedy in existence. The feeling of discord is not a compulsory element for goodness, but it sometimes occurs between two good actual entities. Charles Hartshorne's notion of "positive incompatibility" is related to this idea.⁴³ The fundamental reason for affliction in the universe is in the principle of positive incompatibility with the creativity of the actual

⁴⁰. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 266.

⁴¹. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 257.

⁴². Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 266.

⁴³. Charles Hartshorne, *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method* (London: SCM Press, 1970), 311.

entity.⁴⁴ Hartshorne states, "Freedom and the incompatibility of goods are enough to make a purely harmonious world impossible."⁴⁵ Although the feeling of discord is evil in the most general sense, it is a necessary byproduct of the process of actualities toward creative advance.

Whitehead states, "Decay, Transition, Loss, Displacement belong to the essence of the Creative Advance....As soon as high consciousness is reached, the enjoyment of existence is entwined with pain, frustration, loss, and tragedy."⁴⁶ In fact, Whitehead sees, "Progress is founded upon the experience of discordant feelings. The social value of liberty lies in its production of discords."⁴⁷ Thus, the quest for aesthetic value always requires experiences that contain elements of discord as well as harmony.

A constant pursuit for aesthetic value motivates creative synthesis. Every new synthesis attains some value because the causal data become a new experience in new concrescence. Hartshorne states, "Creativity guarantees a minimum of value to the actual entity."⁴⁸ No actual entity is valueless because every experience has an aesthetic achievement to varying degree. The aesthetic value, which every concrescence pursues,

⁴⁴. Hartshorne, *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method*, 311.

⁴⁵. Hartshorne, *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method*, 311.

⁴⁶. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 286.

⁴⁷. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 257.

⁴⁸. Hartshorne, *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method*, 306.

"contains an intensity and diversity amid stability, or, in other words, a balance of unity and variety, a harmony in diversity."⁴⁹ The more valuable forms of experience necessitate intensity as well as harmony so that goodness overcomes triviality and mutual destruction.⁵⁰ Aesthetic value is found in experiences that contain elements of order, discord, and diversity.

The capacities of actual entities for good and evil are correlative with their power of self-determination: the more freedom, the greater the possibility of value, but also the greater the danger.⁵¹ If there is trivial freedom, there is trivial value; on the other hand, if there is intense freedom, there is intense value. No significant degree of intrinsic value would be possible without a significant degree of freedom. John B. Cobb states, "To escape triviality necessarily means to risk discord."⁵² With each new level of complexity, there arise not only new possibilities for intensity and harmony, but also new possibilities for triviality and discord. This risk is relevant to unintentional evils attributed to nature as well as deliberate

⁴⁹. Barry L. Whitney, *Evil and the Process God* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1985), 144.

⁵⁰. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 291.

⁵¹. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 296.

⁵². John B. Cobb and David Ray Griffin, *Process Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 73.

moral evils attributed to human beings.⁵³ The freedom of the actual entity necessarily results in some degree of conflict and suffering because every choice from the realm of possibilities creates certain kinds of effects on other actual entities. Without an absolute divine determinism of events, both unavoidable and intentional evils are bound to occur. In Whitehead's cosmology, the enjoyment of intense freedom is prerequisite for intense discord as well as intense harmony. To pursue more intense value is to have the possibility of more intense discord as well as the possibility of the more intense harmony.

God continues to encourage the evolutionary advance for the sake of aesthetic value. God's role "is not to enforce a maximal ratio of good to evil, but a maximal ratio of chances of good to chances of evil."⁵⁴ Like all other actual entities, God seeks experiences of significant value, experiences that avoid the triviality of an absolute chaos as well as the monotony of an absolute order wherein there would be no discord. This is a risk that God is willing to take, since the risk of greater evils is accompanied by the opportunities for greater aesthetic goods.⁵⁵ Although God risks the possibilities of discord, Griffin explains, "The divine

⁵³. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 95.

⁵⁴. Hartshorne, *Reality as Social Process* (New York: Hafner Publishing, 1971), 107.

⁵⁵. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 309.

lure toward intensity and complexity also makes possible the enjoyment of the more valuable aesthetic harmonies."⁵⁶ Whitehead understands that God did not create an ordered paradise, or that a world totally devoid of discord and triviality is not the only creation consistent with a God who has perfect love and power. All actual entities necessarily seek and require aesthetic value, value that is both intense and harmonious. Such a value can be achieved by avoiding the aesthetic extremes not only of an absolute discord, but also of an absolute order.⁵⁷

Whereas free will scholars traditionally assigned only moral evil to human free will, process scholars attributes physical evil as well as moral evil to the creativity of actual entities because they have a certain degree of creativity.⁵⁸ This creativity causes physical as well as moral evils, by the mutual conflict among actual entities. Thus, neither moral nor physical evils are the result of God's providence as tests, trials, or punishments. In a world of genuinely self-creative actual entities, the possibility of no evil occurring is nonsense. Actual entities with greater capacity for intrinsic good necessarily have more power, therefore more capacity to be more evil. The good cannot be realized without the risk of the evil. Griffin states, "[The] view [of process thought] does not suggest

⁵⁶. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 308.

⁵⁷. Whitney, *Evil and the Process God*, 115.

⁵⁸. Whitney, *Evil and the Process God*, 130.

that God's aims will be achieved regardless of what we creatures do, a view which logically undercuts the importance of our efforts. Rather, God's aims will be achieved only through us, and hence only if and to the degree that we respond."⁵⁹ According to Whitehead's metaphysical principle, even God does not and cannot have the best of all possible worlds without the danger of its being corrupted into the worst. Although possibility does not mean necessity, the possibility of good necessitates the possibility of evil. This is the process response to why there is so much suffering in the world. God in process thought constantly persuades every actual entity to experience beauty and goodness. The struggle with evil is the effort of a constructing process, which leads to the intrinsic good: harmony and intensity. What is crucial in Whitehead's theodicy is the belief that the freedom and responsibility of the actual entity has eternal value and significance.

In the last part of *Process and Reality*, Whitehead introduces a new phrase "perpetual perishing" as the ground of the ultimate evil. The ultimate evil is located in time as perpetual perishing. Whitehead states, "The ultimate evil in the temporal world is deeper than any specific evil. It lies in the fact that the past fades, that time is a 'perpetual perishing.'"⁶⁰

⁵⁹. David Ray Griffin. "Values, Evil, and Liberation Theology." *Encounter* 40, no. 1 (Winter 1979): 15.

⁶⁰. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 340.

The process of concrescence and transition always contains some kinds of loss. Whitehead calls this loss or the elimination of the past in process as perpetual perishing. Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki explains, "[The] loss of immediacy is the primary meaning of evil as perpetual perishing in Whitehead. It is called 'perpetual' perishing in that he conceives existence to be compiled by innumerable instances of creativity, or actual entities, each of which comes into being and perishes in rapid succession."⁶¹ Whitehead explains the concept of perpetual perishing in the context of evolutionary theory. He states, "[T]he depths of life require a process of selection. But the selection is elimination as the first step towards another temporal order seeking to minimize obstructive modes. Selection is at once the measure of evil, and the process of its evasion. It means discarding the element of obstructiveness in fact."⁶² In the evolutionary process of the universe, selection always necessitates the process of exclusion as well as the process of inclusion. Although the decisions of the actual entity may aim to harmony and order, it always produces some kinds of elimination in the process of the actual entity. Whitehead states, "Whatever is realized in any one occasion of experience necessarily excludes the unbounded welter of contrary

⁶¹. Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, *The End of Evil* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 63.

⁶². Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 340.

possibilities. There are always 'others', which might have been and are not."⁶³ With every new experience, certain values are actualized, but other potential values are not chosen, and thus lost. Suchocki states, "Perpetual perishing is the loss of each drop of actuality, even though there is an endurance of the total effect....Existence involves an inevitable loss of immediacy, a death, at microscopic and macroscopic levels."⁶⁴ Whitehead understands that the notion of right and wrong is attributed to the fact that "the immediate facts of present action pass into permanent significance for the universe."⁶⁵ The history of the universe is the continuing evolutionary process toward creative advance in the midst of tragedies of "perpetual perishing."

The Basic Elements of Whitehead's Process Theodicy

Although Whitehead does not present the so called the problem of evil, one can trace his notion of theodicy from *Science and the Modern World* to *Adventures of Ideas*. Whitehead constantly maintains some important ideas in regards to the problem of evil.

First of all, Whitehead ardently objects traditional Christian answers in relation to the problem of evil. Whitehead states, "All simplifications of

⁶³. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 276.

⁶⁴. Suchocki, *End of Evil*, 63-64.

⁶⁵. Alfred North Whitehead, "Immortality" in *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead*, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1951), 698.

religious dogma are shipwrecked upon the rock of the problem of evil."⁶⁶ Whitehead rightly sees that simple dogmatic answers cannot offer a plausible answer to the problem of evil. Referring to the Book of Job, in *Religion in the Making*, Whitehead criticizes the idea that all sufferings are due to the wrong choices of human beings. This is the rejection of a naïve freewill response to the problem of evil. Whitehead also rejects that everything is "for the best in the best of possible worlds, and that the justice of God is beautifully evident in everything that happens."⁶⁷ This is the refusal of any attempts to deny the reality of genuine evil, implicitly rejecting Leibniz's approach to the problem of evil. Whitehead states, "No religion which faces facts can minimize the evil in the world, not merely the moral evil, but the pain and the suffering."⁶⁸ For him, traditional responses to evil represent only a partial knowledge that might lead to major mistakes.

Second, Whitehead's corpus consistently insists that the traditional ideas of God are not adequate and are in need of revising its meanings in relation to the problem of evil and suffering in the world. In *Science and the Modern World*, Whitehead opposes to the traditional idea of God as

⁶⁶. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1996), 77.

⁶⁷. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 48.

⁶⁸. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 49.

the "metaphysical compliment," since there is no way to avoid the dilemma that God becomes to be responsible for the evil and suffering in the world.⁶⁹ Instead of God as "the foundation of the metaphysical situation," Whitehead offers the conception of divine reality as "the supreme ground for limitation," which is the ultimate principle of determining concrete actuality.⁷⁰ God as the supreme ground for limitation means that the very nature of God is separated from the evil because God is the ground of the principles of the universe and the actual entities in the universe have their own power of decision.⁷¹ The idea of divine reality as "supreme ground for limitation" also offers that the conception of the divine power as compatible with rationality.⁷²

In *Religion in the Making*, Whitehead's refusal of the traditional meaning of the omnipotent God is closely related to his rejection of the idea of absolute determinism. He opposes to the theory of determinism because the evil in the world would be in conformity with the nature of God. Whitehead states, "If we trace the evil in the world to the determinism derived from God, then the inconsistency in the world is derived from the consistency of God. Also the incompleteness in the world is

⁶⁹. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 180.

⁷⁰. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 180.

⁷¹. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 180.

⁷². Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 180.

derivative from the completion of God."⁷³ If God determines every event in the world, the evil in the world is attributed to God. In order to vindicate God from the blame of evil, Whitehead suggests that God is an actual entity that "enters into every creative phase but is above change."⁷⁴

Again, in *Process and Reality* and *Adventures of Ideas*, Whitehead rejects the traditional Augustinian, Calvinian idea of the unilateral God's power and will. Augustine's doctrine of grace is attributed to the notion of a wholly transcendent God, who randomly gives some favors to the chosen creatures. Calvin's doctrine also proposes that the salvation is an arbitrary selection of God's will. In this traditional idea of God, God causes or permits every event in the world. God is the controller of the world in potentiality and in actuality. This idea presupposes that "it is possible for one actual being's condition to be completely determined by a being or beings other than itself."⁷⁵ Whitehead criticizes this traditional omnipotent idea of God because God becomes a "tyrant"⁷⁶ and "the supreme agency of compulsion."⁷⁷ Hartshorne also criticizes the omnipotent God

⁷³. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 99.

⁷⁴. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 98.

⁷⁵. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 264.

⁷⁶. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 191.

⁷⁷. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 166.

as having an actual "monopoly of decision-making"⁷⁸ and who seemingly can prevent anything undesirable from occurring by performing miraculous interventions. The traditional notion of God's power is "unqualified omnipotence," which is "accompanied by responsibility for every detail of every happening."⁷⁹ Suchocki critically states, "[T]he God who overcomes evil is the God who causes evil.... If God created conditions which necessarily entail evil, the eternal punishment as the correction of evil seems a dubious justice."⁸⁰ Traditional theists have shared this common belief in God's power as all pervasive. Such an understanding of divine power renders problematic any genuine autonomy of the actual entity. Accordingly, Whitehead and process scholars who have followed him, vigorously oppose to the traditional ideas of God such as omnipotence, omniscience, and immutability. While revising these traditional conceptions of God, Whitehead and process thinkers propose persuasive supreme divine power, prehension of the actual entity, and mutability.

Third, the Whitehead's corpus emphasizes the freedom of the actual entity, while describing God's power as the persuasive power, not

⁷⁸. Hartshorne, "A New Look at the Problem of Evil," 202.

⁷⁹. Whitehead, *Adventures of Idea*, 166.

⁸⁰. Suchocki, *End of Evil*, 24.

coercive.⁸¹ God does not coercively predetermine or control the activities of the actual entity, and God does not compulsively intervene in the affairs of the world, either. Instead of regarding God's power as coercive omnipotent power, Whitehead understands God as the causal source of a persuasive lure. God is "a persuasive agency" and "not a coercive agency"⁸² who operates with an "absence of force,"⁸³ thereby permitting a real and significant freedom of the actual entity. God's persuasive power is the supreme power that God actually has. Since God's persuasive power operates without unilateral force, God can give genuine freedom to the actual entity. Every actual entity has the genuine power of self-determination and influencing power. The process of concrescence and transition represents the actual entity's power of self-determination and creative influence toward other actual entities. Since actual entities essentially have some power to determine themselves and to influence other things, God cannot unilaterally determine any affairs of actual entities.⁸⁴ Whitehead states, "All actual entities share with God these characters of self-causation and efficient causation. For these two reasons every actual entity has the characteristics of transcending all

⁸¹. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 276.

⁸². Whitehead, *Adventures of Idea*, 213.

⁸³. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 57.

⁸⁴. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 280.

other actual entities, including God."⁸⁵ It is impossible for God to have a monopoly on power because this notion of power contradicts the autonomy of the actual entity. God's power is not the power to control any events of the world. Griffin explains, "God cannot totally determine the concrescence of any actual occasion... since [the actual entity] necessarily has power to create itself, beyond the influence of God."⁸⁶ God's power as a persuasive lure is a positive motivation that determines what actual entities should do, but actual entities determine what they do because of their power of self-determination. Thus, the existence of evil does not contradict the belief that the supreme power of the universe is perfectly good, because this supreme power is not the sole power.

The notion of God as persuasive resolves the problem of reconciling creaturely freedom and divine power. God's role is to provide the actual entity with an initial subjective aim as a lure toward "ideal possibilities, possibilities [that the actual entity] may or may not actualize."⁸⁷ If God's aims are fully actualized, the actual entity will experience the maximum value and intensity possible for it within its circumstances. On the other hand, if the actual entity makes a decision not to actualize the initial aims presented by God, there is a failure of value and intensity. God's

⁸⁵. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 222.

⁸⁶. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 280.

⁸⁷. Whitney, *Evil and the Process God*, 96.

persuasive power inspires freedom in the actual entity and seeks to "maximize opportunities for good and minimize risks of evil."⁸⁸ God's initial aim is an initial persuasion toward the possibility of the existence of an actual entity, which would be best for it. God gives the initial aim, and the subject develops the subjective aim. This implies that actual entities are responsible for the good and evil in the world. The evil comes out of the actual entity itself, not out of God, albeit God gives the initial aim to the actual entity. The determinations between good and evil come from the decisions of the actual entity itself. God's power operates within the actual entity as an effective lure without defying the autonomy of the actual entity. Though there is no guarantee that the actual entity will continually evolve toward more and greater goodness and value, the actual entity has the great opportunity to respond to the divine lure.

Finally, God is the compassionate participant in the middle of suffering and overcomes the evils in the world. Griffin explains, "God delights in the enjoyments of creatures, but also shares all the pains, being literally sympathetic, compassionate."⁸⁹ God is not an impassive absolute who merely observes the suffering of the actual entity without compassion. God is, rather, a sympathetic partaker in the midst of suffering and offers

⁸⁸. Hartshorne, "A New Look at the Problem of Evil," 210.

⁸⁹. Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, 33.

the guarantee that the risk of genuine freedom is worthwhile.⁹⁰ God is “the great companion—the fellow sufferer who understands”⁹¹ and experiences sorrows in all the sorrows of the actual entity.⁹² God is, in Hartshorne’s phrases, “being to whom suffering is never alien”⁹³ and is the “cosmic sufferer, who endures infinitely more evil than we can imagine.”⁹⁴ God’s perfection does not mean God’s immunity to the world, but God’s complete reaction to the contingency of the actual entity.

God is not only compassionate, but also overcomes the evil while offering ideal aims. Evil is not eradicated in God’s experience of the world, but it is reckoned part of God’s everlasting experience, which embraces its harmony and discord. God overcomes evil, while God insistently lures the actual entity to achieve God’s initial aims. Griffin explains that God is “not merely an observer or even feeler of the world’s processes but also an active participant in them, presenting ideal aims for all occasions.”⁹⁵ The divine lure is regarded as a moral momentum of overcoming evil for

⁹⁰. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 309.

⁹¹. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 351.

⁹². Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 350.

⁹³. Charles Hartshorne, *Man’s Vision of God and the Logic of Theism* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1964), 172.

⁹⁴. Hartshorne, *Man’s Vision of God and the Logic of Theism*, 172.

⁹⁵. David Ray Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 318.

human beings to achieve goodness. Barry L. Whitney explains, "God's synthetic experience appreciates whatever goods are possible next, and this divine perception becomes the initial aim."⁹⁶ The initial aims of God seek more value and beauty in the world. God assures that the risk for goodness is worthwhile, although there is no guarantee that the world order will be progressive. Whereas God always offers ideal aims to the actual entities, the actual entities continually work together in overcoming evils in the world according to their responses to God's ideal aims.

⁹⁶. Whitney, *Evil and the Process God*, 155.

CHAPTER 4 THREE DEVELOPMENTS OF PROCESS THEODICY

The Variety of Process Theodicies

Griffin, Cooper, and Inbody are variously influenced by the perspective of process philosophies of Alfred N. Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne. Because these two originators of process philosophy mainly focus on the construction of metaphysics, they did not primarily make efforts to present the so-called problem of evil. However, the dipolar conception of God, the creativity of the actual entity, nondualistic relational understanding between heaven and earth, and other various important conceptions of process philosophy offered various insights for later process scholarship in the construction of process theodicy.

Griffin initially establishes a standard process theodicy closely following the thoughts of Whitehead and Hartshorne. On the other hand, Cooper and Inbody take advantage of some important process thoughts in their understanding of the problem of evil and propose somewhat revised versions of process theodicy, which are efforts to be acceptable both to process scholarship and to traditional Christian groups. It is Griffin who first researched previous process scholars and presented a full-fledged version of process theodicy.¹ Griffin's fundamental interest is to offer a consistent rationale to the problem of evil, so his approach can be

¹. David Griffin's first and major publication on theodicy is *God, Power, and Evil: A Process Theodicy*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976).

called a logical process theodicy. In Griffin's contemplation, neither traditional theism nor radical atheism proposes a plausible worldview in relation to the problem of evil. Accordingly, Griffin's main effort on theodicy is to present a logical rationale against both atheists and traditional theists. Cooper, on the other hand, considers the biblical tradition still valuable to contemporary Christianity. Although the biblical understanding of evil does not fully propose a consistent rationale on the problem of evil, Cooper insists that the Scriptures offer existential answers to suffering people.² In this sense, his approach has existential propensity in order to find a valuable meaning in the middle of suffering. Since Cooper finds a close connection between process thought and Christology, he also has a Christ-centered propensity in his understanding of the problem of evil and suffering. In a similar way, Inbody's theodicy also has an existential tendency because his initial concern is to create an indispensable meaning in the middle of affliction and tragedy.³ Since he seeks to relate process theodicy to Trinitarian view of suffering, his approach can be called an existential, Trinitarian, process theodicy.

Griffin's initial interest in theodicy is to present a coherent theoretical process view. While objecting both to atheistic disputes and to

². Burton Z. Cooper, *Why God?* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1988), 8.

³. Tyron Inbody, *The Transforming God: An Interpretation of Suffering and Evil* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 27.

inadequate traditional responses, Griffin argues that a coherent theodicy should be rooted in a revised concept of God based on process philosophy. Since Griffin's theodicy was created in the middle of controversial debates against atheism and traditional theism, it has highly polemical and logical. Griffin partly agrees with atheistic arguments that the traditional notion of an omnipotent and benevolent God contradicts the facts of evil and suffering in the world.

The atheist J. L. Mackie explicitly denies the existence of God. His denial is attributed to two theological assumptions. In a broad sense, Mackie insists that there is no rational evidence of the existence of God. Specifically the existence of the problem of evil cannot support the existence of God. In relation to the problem of evil, Mackie claims it is wrong to hold the notion of God as omnipotent and God as benevolent at the same time. The reality of the evils and afflictions in the world demonstrates the fallacy of the existence of all-powerful and all-loving God. Mackie states, "The problem of evil may be presented as a formally valid disproof of the set of propositions which constitutes traditional theism, as a demonstration that this set is internally inconsistent, so that these propositions cannot all be true."⁴ His argument is that one of propositions—God is omnipotent; God is benevolent, and evil exists—at least should be discarded in order to maintain a logical consistency.

4. J. L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 4.

Mackie illustrates two kinds of freedom: freedom that can choose sometimes good and sometimes evil, and freedom that can always choose good. Then, he asks, "If God has made men such that in their free choices they sometimes prefer what is good and sometimes what is evil, why could he not have made men such that they always freely choose the good?"⁵ If God is omnipotent and benevolent, Mackie insists, God should have created human beings with the freedom that always can choose good because the latter is logically superior to the former. He argues that God should have made human beings who "would act freely but always go right."⁶ However, God did not make this kind of human being and world. As a consequence, Mackie ascertains that the notion of the omnipotent and benevolent God contradicts the reality of evil in the world.

Griffin concurs that the atheistic attack on the traditional meaning of omnipotence is right, and he concludes, "No adequate solution is possible within the context of this traditional idea of God."⁷ The traditional idea of the omnipotent God makes the theodicy issue problematic and

⁵. J. L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," in *The Problem of Evil*, ed. Marilyn McCord Adams and Robert Merrihew Adams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 33.

⁶. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," 33.

⁷. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 12.

unsolvable.⁸ Griffin explains, "The main reason for the failure of traditional theism was not the weakness of its arguments against atheism but the fact that traditional theism's concept of God was inconsistent with the world."⁹ Griffin thinks that it is not possible to resolve the theodicy problem within the structure of the traditional notion of God because traditional theism has internal inconsistency. The difference between atheists and Griffin is that the former concludes that God does not exist or God is not omnipotent, and the latter reconsiders the meaning of omnipotence, which is the most controversial issue of theodicy. Griffin states, "If the term all-powerful (omnipotent) were taken to mean only this—that the divine reality is the supreme power of the universe and vastly more powerful than all others—an insoluble theoretical problem of evil would not necessarily result."¹⁰ By revising the traditional view of omnipotence, Griffin finds a way to exonerate God from responsibility for the evil and suffering in the world. Griffin confirms, "God not only does not but also in principle could not completely control events in the world."¹¹ In Griffin's estimation, God

⁸. Barry L. Whitney, *Evil and the Process God* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1985), 40.

⁹. David Ray Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 202.

¹⁰. David Ray Griffin, "Divine Goodness and Demonic Evil," in *Evil and the Response of World Religions*, ed. William Cenkner (St. Paul, MI: Paragon House, 1997), 224.

¹¹. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 275.

does not need to be justified for permitting evil, since God's power is not the kind of permitting or preventing evil.

Cooper's distinctiveness is twofold. First, while trying to anchor process theodicy to the biblical resources, he argues that the biblical stories actually support God's image as vulnerable rather than omnipotent and omniscient. The central image of God in the Scriptures is the God who is not invulnerable but vulnerable to the world and suffering with creatures. In Cooper's interpretation of the book of Job, for example, he stresses that the book of Job cannot be understood properly unless one changes from the monarchial image of God to the vulnerable image of God.¹² Cooper ponders, "When Job says, 'Now my eye sees thee,' what image of God does he see?"¹³ If Job thought of God as one who gives or permits affliction to the innocent, Cooper suggests, Job could not have obtained the so-called peace of mind. His peace of mind could be obtained only through a vulnerable image of God, who understands, feels, participates, and overcomes afflictions together with Job. Cooper continues to present that many biblical texts actually demonstrate the image of the vulnerable God rather than the monarchial image of God. The God of biblical scriptures is not all-knowing or all-controlling, but is vulnerable to human

¹². Cooper, *Why God?*, 55.

¹³. Cooper, *Why God?*, 56.

suffering and agony. God's vulnerability for Cooper is nothing but the other expression of God's love and justice to the universe.¹⁴

The second element of Cooper's distinctive process approach is found in his emphasis on the Christological vision of God. This vision is the bedrock for the Christian solution to the problem of evil. Cooper states, "We need to talk about the power of suffering love. We have come to the cross of Christ. Here is the starting point for the Christian answer to the power of evil in our lives and in our world."¹⁵ In order to propose the power of the suffering love of God, Cooper appeals to the image of God hanging on the cross, and finally resurrected from the dead. The image of Jesus on the cross is the crucified God who suffers and is vulnerable. God on the cross redeems humankind only through the suffering power of love. This suffering love of the Cross is not coercive power but persuasive power. Cooper states, "Jesus on the cross presents his failure to God. [However,] it is the failure of suffering love to coerce a loving response.... In his defeat, Christ denies the identification of God's power with coercion."¹⁶ The love of the crucified God shows that "Jesus cannot stand against the evil of suffering without suffering the evil of the cross."¹⁷ However, the suffering

¹⁴. Cooper, *Why God?*, 50.

¹⁵. Cooper, *Why God?*, 97.

¹⁶. Cooper, *Why God?*, 123.

¹⁷. Cooper, *Why God?*, 118.

love of God revealed on the cross does not lead one to a God who is feeble in relation to the overcoming power against evil. The suffering God in the cross overcomes and defeats the forces of evil through the power of resurrection. Inbody also sees this powerful Christological vision of God saying, "The courage that is given to faith in the presence of the crucified and resurrected Christ is the courage of acceptance, endurance, and transformation."¹⁸ What Cooper sees in the image of God on the cross and the resurrection, along with Inbody, is the vulnerable suffering God, who could overcome the power of evil.

Inbody's uniqueness on theodicy is an effort to combine process theodicy with what he calls "Trinitarian theodicy." The contact point between the two is the conception of the relational God. Although Inbody adopts important concepts from process thought, he utilizes the triune image of God rather than process dipolar image of God. This is an appeal to the Christian tradition in some degree, although he proposes a new vision of the trinity dissimilar to the traditional image of the triune God. Inbody insists that the conception of the triune God is central to a Christian answer to the problem of evil. He distinguishes the triune image of God from the traditional theistic idea of God. The idea of triune God, Inbody argues, stands against the theistic concept of God defined by

¹⁸. Inbody, *Transforming God*, 179.

impassibility, immutability, and omnipotence.¹⁹ He states, "God is not the Father who is usually conceived in classical theistic categories, but God is the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."²⁰ Inbody argues that process thinkers in general do not distinguish the monarchical image of God from the image of the triune God. In Inbody's thought, the genuine power of the triune God is not omnipotence but suffering, reconciling, and liberating power, albeit the traditional monotheistic image of God has been proposed as an image of omnipotent and omniscient God.²¹

The new image of the triune God offers the relational image of God as all-loving God. The trinity of God shows mutual interrelationship and self-relatedness in God's own life. Inbody insists that "the theistic problem of how to reconcile the omnipotent power of the absolute, unitary, unrelated God to evil and suffering evaporates,"²² since the triune God is not an isolated center of power. Since the triune God is marked by the power of love revealed in the cross and resurrection of Jesus, the trinity shows that the essence of God is becoming and relatedness rather than being. The relational God of trinity is "the God of suffering and

¹⁹. Inbody, *Transforming God*, 176.

²⁰. Inbody, *Transforming God*, 176.

²¹. Inbody, *Transforming God*, 164. Also see, Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), 116.

²². Inbody, *Transforming God*, 176.

transforming love," while undergoing suffering together with creatures.²³ The triune God's response to suffering creatures is "to enter the travail of life and to conquer the pain, suffering, travail, and evil from within."²⁴

Influences of Whitehead's and/or Hartshorne's Thought on Cooper,
Inbody, and Griffin

It is not an easy task to express how Cooper, Inbody, and Griffin distinctively draw from the specific thought of Whitehead and/or Hartshorne because their understandings on process thought overlaps to a large extent. My suspicion is that Cooper and Inbody are somewhat dependent on the structure of Griffin's theodicy as a whole. There are some reasons to suppose that Cooper and Inbody were influenced by Griffin's original work. Not only were Cooper's and Inbody's main works on theodicy published later than Griffin's major theodicy work, but also one can see many citations from Griffin's work in the Cooper's and Inbody's publications. In addition, Cooper and Inbody seldom quote from Whitehead's or Hartshorne's work directly. However, the main reason for my assumption is that I do not see much difference on Cooper's and Inbody's basic understandings of process theodicy from Griffin's original presentation on the problem of evil.

²³. Inbody, *Transforming God*, 176.

²⁴. Inbody, *Transforming God*, 177.

Although Cooper's Christocentric tendency, Inbody's Trinitarian inclination, and Griffin's theoretical propensity have different emphases, the three approaches have several commonalities since they all drew from Whitehead and Hartshorne in some aspects. First of all, Cooper, Inbody, and Griffin reject traditional Christian views on suffering as retributive punishment, pedagogy, eschatological justification, and divine mystery. These traditional interpretations of suffering claim in retrospect: 1) suffering is retributive punishment. It is a matter of justice, 2) suffering is education for spiritual growth and maturity, 3) the eschatological compensation will justify the pain and suffering of the victim. The greater good in the future will substantiate the present suffering, and 4) the every suffering is not meaningless, but the meaning of suffering is in the ultimate mystery of God. St. Augustine and traditional theists understand that the world is entirely good and perfect. God willed all happenings for God's hidden purposes from the beginning of the world, and the omnipotent God will makes everything good in the future. This traditional understanding presupposes that evil and suffering have certain kinds of positive functions beyond human history, although human beings do not know all the purposes of God in the world. For Augustine and the traditional theists, evil always "has a necessary role within the perfect purpose of God."²⁵ Thus, traditional theists propose that evil is only

²⁵. Inbody, *Transforming God*, 41-42.

apparent, and there is no genuine evil.²⁶ Cooper, Inbody, and Griffin reject any attempt of denying the reality of evil and affirm that the world contains genuine evil, which refers to some negative elements of life without which the world would have been better.²⁷

Second, by accepting Whitehead's conception of divine power, these three process scholars revise the traditional idea of divine power from coercive to persuasive.²⁸ Divine power is the power to persuade and to lure the actual entity rather than the power unilaterally to impose upon or control it. Griffin argues that the "notion in the traditional idea of God in Western thought has been the notion that God controls, or at least could control, every detail of the events in the world."²⁹ In a metaphysical sense, to coerce is to unilaterally determine. The unilateral controlling power means to compel one's will, and it is the power to control "the human or natural environment in order to advance one's power purpose."³⁰ The traditional omnipotent God causes, intends, or permits all events of good and bad in the universe by God's eternal purpose. According to traditional theists, the course of the universe definitely proceeds toward

²⁶. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 21.

²⁷. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 22.

²⁸. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 166.

²⁹. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 16-17.

³⁰. Inbody, *Transforming God*, 137.

the completion of divine purpose, and no one has any power beyond the boundary of God's plan.³¹ Consequently, God becomes the author of evil as well as good because nothing happens that God does not cause or allow.³² In traditional theism God is the controller of the world in actual and potential. Cooper, Inbody, and Griffin claim that this traditional understanding of God's power cannot offer a plausible logical rationale and/or cannot provide any proper existential answer to the problem of suffering. Griffin states, "Because God has no monopoly on power, God's power is the creative power to evoke or persuade, it is not the unilateral power to stop, to constrain, to destroy."³³ According to these three process thinkers, divine power as persuasive power is the supreme power that God possesses in actuality.

The conceptual change of divine power from coercion to persuasion does not imply that God is not perfect in power, or that God is not worthy of worship.³⁴ Although many traditional scholars assert that process theodicy denies the concept of the omnipotent God, process thinkers do

³¹. Inbody, *Transforming God*, 46-47.

³². Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 99.

³³. Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, 24.

³⁴. Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, 11.

not even discard the word, omnipotence.³⁵ What they deny is the traditional idea of omnipotence, which is the power that can unilaterally do anything if one wills. Although there are no limitations to God's love, there are certain metaphysical principles in relation to God's power. The real problem lies in making God an absolute exemption to the metaphysical principles.³⁶

Third, Griffin, Cooper, and Inbody emphasize the idea of creativity of the actual entity. The fundamental rationale for the objection to the unilateral divine power, for Whiteheadian-Hartshornian thinkers, is that the notion of unilateral omnipotent power contradicts the genuine freedom of the actual entity. Freewill theists hold the notion that God originally created humankind with genuine freedom, though God could have created a completely controlled world. Because human beings have freedom, they are responsible for their own decisions of right and wrong behaviors. The connection between moral freedom and the possibility of sin explains a great deal of suffering because an enormous amount of

³⁵. Griffin's references to the omnipotent God, for example, are usually critical, and sometimes sharply so. He states, "Either God's omnipotence or moral perfection (or both, or the belief in any God at all) must apparently be given up, if one wishes to retain fidelity to the logical principles of rationality." However, he also says, "It is impossible for the theist to solve the problem of evil by denying that God is less powerful or less moral than a deity might have been." In addition, he states, "A process theodicy need not necessarily reject the application of the term omnipotent to God." See, Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 18, 20, 281.

³⁶. Cooper, *Why God?*, 89.

suffering arises from the inhumanity of such major disasters as poverty, oppression and persecution, war, and injustice, indignity, and inequity. However, freewill theists have a common viewpoint, which is problematic: the notion of God as omnipotent. The belief in God's power as intervenient is problematic for the genuine autonomy of the actual entity. If one is supposed to be totally responsible for one's actions for good and evil, one should not be controlled either actually or potentially by some other reality.

In Griffin, Cooper, and Inbody's thoughts, God can only act persuasively throughout the world because all actual entities have different grades of genuine freedom. Since every actuality has its own creativity, each actual entity has "some power of self-determination" and "some power to influence" other actual entities.³⁷ In other words, every actual entity is the final causation of its activity and will become an efficient causation for other entities.³⁸ Since omnipotent power contradicts the genuine freedom of the actual entity, it is not feasible for God to have a monopoly on power.

Fourth, Cooper, Inbody, and Griffin accept the idea of the compassionate God, who shares all sufferings and pains of the actual entity. Griffin states, "[God] removes the basis for that sense of moral

³⁷. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 279-80.

³⁸. Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, 22.

outrage which would be directed toward an impassive spectator deity who took great risks with the creation."³⁹ The image of God in process thought is quite different from the image of God in traditional theism, which must eventually experience God as "the abuser."⁴⁰ When good things happen, one can praise God's grace; however, when bad things happen, one should believe that these are also from God.⁴¹ In a traditional theism, the loving God on and off becomes "a cosmic sadist."⁴² On the other hand, in thoughts of three process thinkers, the divine reality is not an "outside spectator" who sees the suffering of the actual entity without sympathy, but is the participant who shares all feelings of the actual entity.⁴³ Following Whitehead's famous phrase, God "the great companion—the fellow-sufferer who understands,"⁴⁴ these process thinkers emphasize God's compassion to the creatures. They all notice that God's consequent nature in Whitehead's thought is closely related to God's sympathetic experience to the creatures. Griffin states,

³⁹. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 309.

⁴⁰. Inbody, *Transforming God*, 87.

⁴¹. Inbody, *Transforming God*, 88.

⁴². Inbody, *Transforming God*, 91.

⁴³. Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, 33-34.

⁴⁴. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 351.

"God suffers with our sufferings, as well as enjoying our enjoyments."⁴⁵

Instead of God as a cosmic sadist, God is the "cosmic sufferer" who experiences the world's suffering.⁴⁶ The perfection of God does not imply God's independence on immunity from the actual entity, but an endless loving response to the actual entity. God is in charge of evil in that God responds to the world with compassion, albeit the actual entity has the responsibility for the specific evil.

Fifth, Cooper, Inbody, and Griffin present the idea that God overcomes the suffering of the world. These process scholars assert that God overcomes evil, although this does not involve that the evil human beings suffer here and now will be exterminated or that God will intervene coercively to prevent the occurrence of horrifying evils.⁴⁷ Inbody explains, "God always wills the best possible good to be achieved in every situation we encounter, but cannot unilaterally cause the best to happen."⁴⁸ God overcomes the evils in the world by experiencing it, while God proposes initial aims to every actual occasion. Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki points out, "God's aims to the world inexorably must reflect the value of participating

⁴⁵. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 309.

⁴⁶. Charles Hartshorne, *Man's Vision of God and the Logic of Theism* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1964), 172.

⁴⁷. Whitney, *Evil and the Process God*, 115.

⁴⁸. Inbody, *Transforming God*, 151.

in and contributing to communal richness... The all-inclusive well-being of the many in community is the reflection of God's image in the world."⁴⁹ God's initial aim as a lure toward best possibilities is the ideal aim for the actual entity. Griffin explains, "[God] provides ideal aims for the next state of the world designed to overcome the evil in the world."⁵⁰ The divine lure is a divine force for the actual entity to achieve goodness in opposite to evil. In other words, the initial aim of God is the motivation for overcoming evil. In this way, God's overcoming of evil in the world surely is actively felt.⁵¹ Griffin states, "Since it is overcome in God's consequent nature in the sense that it is responded to with an ideal aim which aims at restoring goodness in the world, this overcoming in God is precisely for the sake of overcoming evil in the world."⁵² Divine Actuality is the one who defeats evil in divine power to provide constant initial aims and love to suffer all evil although he is the cause of none. With the God who always restores good for evil,⁵³ human beings seek to defeat genuine evil and to restore good in the world.

⁴⁹. Marjorie H. Suchocki, *The End of Evil* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 123.

⁵⁰. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 303.

⁵¹. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 305-08.

⁵². Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 305.

⁵³. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 155.

Cooper's primary dependence on process thought is in the idea of persuasive divine power and the image of the vulnerable God, who suffers and overcomes suffering with creatures. Cooper's quest on the ultimate meaning of tragic suffering results in the acceptance of Whitehead's consequent nature of God, who is responsive to and receptive of the worldly suffering of creatures. Cooper's Christological emphasis is also related to this consequent nature of God, who can bestow positive meaning in the suffering life. Inbody's main adoption of Whitehead's thought in respect to the problem of evil is the idea of God, who is creating and redeeming the world. He sees major contribution of process theology to contemporary theodicy in the idea of God as related, caring, and responding to reality in the midst of suffering.⁵⁴

On the other hand, Griffin takes Hartshorne's revisional position in terms of the idea of God, instead of strictly following Whitehead's notion of God. Griffin insists that Hartshorne's revisional concept of God is not a major change from Whitehead's own concept of God and in fact illuminates Whitehead's thought better. In Griffin's words, "The resulting theodicy is in part simply a restatement of certain explicit themes in Whitehead's thought, in part an explication and application of certain notions that are only implicit therein, and in part a modification of Whitehead's position along lines suggested by Hartshorne—a modification

⁵⁴. Inbody, *Transforming God*, 161.

that is regarded as making Whitehead's own position more self-consistent."⁵⁵ Whitehead understands God as "a single actual entity," whereas Hartshorne presents God as the never-ending "temporal series of divine occasions of experience."⁵⁶ For Griffin, to see God as an actual entity is a return to the substance philosophy and a violation of metaphysical principles.⁵⁷ Since God's primordial nature is an abstraction and deficient in actuality, Griffin argues, it cannot be said to be the source of initial aims.⁵⁸ In order to have a coherent metaphysics, Griffin insists that there should be no metaphysical distinctions between God and the world. The societal view of God properly shows the image of God as a cosmic sufferer in relation to the suffering of the world; however, it is hard to illustrate the source of novelty, initial aims, and process if the primordial envisagement is lost.⁵⁹

In *Evil Revisited*, Griffin goes further beyond the previous version of process theodicy, emphasizing God as the ultimate meaning and hope.

⁵⁵. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 275.

⁵⁶. Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, 233.

⁵⁷. David Ray Griffin, review of *The End of Evil: Process Eschatology in Historical Context*, by Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, in *Process Studies* 18, no.1 (Spring 1989): 60.

⁵⁸. Griffin, Review of "The End of Evil," 59.

⁵⁹. Marjorie H. Suchocki, "Evil, Eschatology, and God: Response to David Griffin," *Process Studies* 18, no.1 (Spring 1989): 64.

Griffin states, "God is the ultimate guarantee of the meaningfulness of human life and the trustworthy ground for hope in the ultimate victory of good over evil. These are further points on which I move beyond my previous theodicy."⁶⁰ Since God's persuasive power is a slow-working in history, Griffin insists that "belief in life after death will give us courage to resist the intimidating power of the demonic."⁶¹ Although Griffin still thinks the eschatological vision is optional, he admits that the eschatological vision of God "will increase our conviction that the persuasive, evocative power of love is truly the ultimate power of the universe, the power with which we want to be in harmony."⁶²

Critical Review on the Difference and Conformity among Cooper,
Inbody, and Griffin

Cooper's Christocentric theodicy and Inbody's Trinitarian theodicy have some complementary factor, because for both the event of the cross and the resurrection as well as the conception of the triune God become the central issues in Christology. Since the cross and resurrection of Christ is God's ultimate resolution to the suffering of the world, human suffering can be overcome by experiencing it, not by avoiding it. To imitate the life of Jesus does not stay away from evil, but confronts and

⁶⁰. Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, 34.

⁶¹. Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, 39.

⁶². Griffin, *Evil Revisited*, 39.

transforms it.⁶³ Inbody states, "The cross and resurrection do not dispense with the idea of power, but they do transform it, radically transform it, for the victory of the cross-resurrection is not a victory from the outside which eliminates evil through a unilateral destruction of it; it is a victory from within which accepts and transforms death in all its forms into the possibility of new life."⁶⁴ God's power of the cross and resurrection is the power to transform suffering and death to the kingdom of God.⁶⁵

Cooper and Inbody also have commonality in that they each have a personal, existential propensity on theodicy. The threat of meaninglessness, they think, is deeper than the actual threat of pain and suffering. Borrowing Soren Kierkegaard's famous phrase, Cooper states, "The loss of meaning is the spirit's sickness unto death."⁶⁶ Cooper and Inbody believe that the primary function of theodicy is to find meaning in the middle of suffering. Inbody states, "When a system of meaning is threatened, the problem of evil is not primarily how to fathom and thereby endure particular experiences of suffering with equanimity but whether understanding and meaning are possible at all in the face of the

⁶³. Cooper, *Why God?*, 118.

⁶⁴. Inbody, *Transforming God*, 180.

⁶⁵. Inbody, *Transforming God*, 156.

⁶⁶. Cooper, *Why God?*, 116.

apparent irrationality of the suffering."⁶⁷ For Cooper and Inbody, human beings can endure suffering as long as their suffering is located in a meaningful context. Thus Inbody even says, "[T]he most serious peril that confronts us today is not the presence of suffering as such or even its inevitability but the apparent purposelessness of it, all things considered."⁶⁸ Accordingly, the main function of theodicy for Cooper and Inbody is to create a meaningful order out of chaotic meaningless experiences.

Unlike Griffin's emphasis on theoretical problem of evil, Cooper and Inbody believe that the main purpose of theodicy is not a logical matter but a matter of meaning. They think that "suffering is neither explained nor eliminated by a theological explanation,"⁶⁹ although they admit that Griffin's logical process theodicy is the best theodicy relative to scriptures, tradition, and human experiences.⁷⁰ However, Inbody claims that Griffin's process theodicy explained too much because the problem of evil should focus more on psychological and practical value than theoretical justification. For Cooper and Inbody, de-emphasizing the logical dimension of theodicy might create some theoretical problems. The

⁶⁷. Inbody, *Transforming God*, 16.

⁶⁸. Inbody, *Transforming God*, 16.

⁶⁹. Inbody, *Transforming God*, 163.

⁷⁰. Inbody, *Transforming God*, 160.

problem is that Cooper and Inbody did not and/or could not propose answers to the larger speculative theodicy questions such as the origin of evil or character of evil, although they effectively depict God as a relational and loving reality.

The existential theodicy of Cooper and Inbody is also dangerous in the sense that they make the problem of evil and suffering a conceptual issue rather than a concrete matter. For them, theodicy is primarily the problem of how to recover meaning in abusive suffering. Inbody states, "Experience happens to an organism through a mutual interaction between organism and environment. Experience is neither good nor bad intrinsically. To interpret an experience as suffering and to call that experience evil is to impose an evaluative interpretation on it."⁷¹ Thus, the fundamental issue of theodicy becomes a conceptual matter. Suffering is matter of mind, and the problem of evil is to discover value from the meaninglessness of individuals and groups. Since Cooper and Inbody emphasize meaning in the middle of suffering, they easily make the problem of evil an abstract conception rather than a concrete matter which must be defeated and overcome.

Cooper and Inbody's existential inclination lacks appropriate responses on social problems, since their approaches are mainly concerned about the enigma of individual suffering. For Cooper, the

⁷¹. Inbody, *Transforming God*, 24.

death of his son is centered in his theological reflection on the problem of suffering, and the father's suicide is closely related to the formation of Inbody's theodicy. The main question is for them how to overcome the meaninglessness of life in the mystery of personal tragedy. Inbody even proposes that religious illusion can be valuable to suffering people because it has some kind of therapeutic value. He states, "After all, the real cash value of the language of preaching and pastoral care is its therapeutic value, and religious illusions are more useful than others for most people, especially lay people, so I will keep them alive."⁷² If religious illusion can create a valuable meaning to the sufferer, Inbody thinks that it can be accepted. The main concern for Cooper and Inbody is to recover peace of mind and get over the grief of personal tragedy because there is no way to bring back the beloved. Existential approach might have some positive role in relation to suffering people because it gives some useful pastoral answers to unsolvable human suffering such as a sudden death or incurable disease of the beloved. Within the existential paradigm of the problem of evil, however, there are not many practical responses to lessen and to annihilate the power of evil, especially in the case of the suffering exerted by the name of injustice and inequality.

There is also commonality between Inbody's and Griffin's theodicies in the sense that they shared the conception of the relational God. Inbody

⁷². Inbody, *Transforming God*, 161.

distinguishes the triune God from the traditional monotheistic God. He insists that the concept of the relational God is central to the Christian idea of God because the God of Christianity is not classical monotheistic God but Trinitarian and process God.⁷³ Although the doctrine of the trinity can be interpreted within a traditional theistic framework, such ideas God as immutability, omnipotence, or omniscience, the doctrine of the triune God can also be understood the relational and persuasive God within a different perspective. Inbody states, "The doctrine of the Trinity introduces a dynamic principle into the immutability of the classical theistic God."⁷⁴ The triune God dwells each other and bonds together each other in love. While process theodicy provides one way of understanding God as the relational and loving God, Inbody insists, Trinitarian theodicy is other way to reconstruct the concept of suffering and transforming God.⁷⁵

However, there is constant distinction between Inbody's Trinitarian theodicy and Griffin's process theodicy. Trinitarian theology is based on the revelation of God, whereas process theology appeals to rationality. The doctrine of the trinity begins with God's being as it is revealed to us. It is an interpretation of God's self-revelation, which is rooted in the belief in Scriptures. In other words, Trinitarian theodicy is based on *a priori* that is

⁷³. Inbody, *Transforming God*, 176.

⁷⁴. Inbody, *Transforming God*, 166.

⁷⁵. Inbody, *Transforming God*, 172-73.

beyond human experience, whereas process theodicy is rooted in a *posteriori*, which is based on empirical experience. Whitehead states, "If our trust is in the ultimate power of reason as a discipline for the discernment of truth, we have no right to impose such a *priori* conditions."⁷⁶ Whereas Trinitarian theologians think that the truth can be given from a *priori* sources, Whitehead emphasizes the role of reason and empirical knowledge. Hume on the basis of this sensory empiricism argues, "We have no direct experience of causation or of an external world of other actual things."⁷⁷ Whitehead agrees to Hume's claim that causation must be explained as a factor of experience. But, he disagrees with Hume's further request that "causation must be describable as an element only in sensory experience."⁷⁸ Whitehead, for instance, argues that our awareness of our body's causal efficacy is due to our nonsensory perception of this efficacy.⁷⁹ Whitehead's actual sensory perception is a synthesis of "perception in the mode of presentational immediacy" and "perception in the mode of causal efficacy," in which one recognizes "other things as actual and as exercising causal efficacy on us."⁸⁰

⁷⁶. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 77.

⁷⁷. Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism*, 55.

⁷⁸. Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism*, 56.

⁷⁹. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 81.

⁸⁰. Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism*, 60.

According to Whitehead, the mode of non-sensory perception, which is also based on empirical experience, allows us to recognize divine reality.

Inbody acknowledges many positive elements of process thoughts to an adequate Christian understanding and response to suffering and evil. Although Inbody aligns himself with both Trinitarian and process theologians, he is hesitant to fully accept process theodicy. The main reason of negative appraisal to process theodicy is that process thinkers do not often reflect the positive aspect of the triune God; rather, they just assail the traditional idea of theistic God without clarifying between theistic God and triune God. Inbody states, "Process critics seldom identify the Christian God with trinitarianism. By doing this they claim that the classical theistic God is static and unaffected by the suffering of the world."⁸¹ Without recognizing the differences between traditional theism and Trinitarian theism, process thinkers claim that the traditional idea of God is omnipotent, omnipresent, and immune. However, some modern forms of Trinitarian idea of God, Inbody insists, involve an essential relatedness and dynamism.⁸²

Second, Inbody criticizes that the process theodicy has some kind of "class dependent" or "class specific" elements. He wonders that process theodicy can be an ideology for the middle and upper class of the

⁸¹. Inbody, *Transforming God*, 160.

⁸². Inbody, *Transforming God*, 160.

Western society. In other words, process theology can be “a bourgeois ideology, which serves to create and reinforce the belief that we are free, responsible, and capable to make our own good and evil in a fundamentally supportive environment.”⁸³ Inbody goes on to state, “[T]he social location and ideological misuse of the process view of the world with respect to suffering and evil lurks at its edges, if not at its center, as one of its ever-present liabilities.”⁸⁴ In fact, many middle-class people having power utilize a notion of freedom and justify their oppressions to marginalized people, whether they acknowledge it or not.

In sum, Cooper, Inbody, and Griffin have some commonalities such as, the rejection of the traditional theism and the acceptance of essential process thoughts. They also show the diversities of theodicies according to their existential, theological, or philosophical propensities. One of significant contributions of process thought to theodicy is an understanding of the God who suffers compassionately with the creatures. With the notion of initial aim and consequent nature, one understands God as a sympathetic participant for overcoming the suffering and evil of the universe. God persuasively calls for implanting new ideals.⁸⁵ To seek to maximize importance is to adopt the divine aim as one’s own. With the

⁸³. Inbody, *Transforming God*, 157.

⁸⁴. Inbody, *Transforming God*, 158.

⁸⁵. Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism*, 311.

God who always returns good for evil, we seek to defeat genuine evil and to restore goodness in the world.⁸⁶

One of the main negative aspects of these three theodicies, however, is that they are feeble in praxis for world suffering. Their approaches to the problem of evil focus more on logical or individual suffering rather than the praxial or social dimension of suffering. In my next chapter I will propose a “praxis process theodicy,” arguing that the setting of theodicy should be located in praxis, which is a practical claim to the concrete situation of the suffering world. Human beings encounter not only the theoretical or existential problem of evil but also meet the demand of praxis to diminish and to defeat calamity and suffering, especially in diverse social contexts. The theodicy issue is not justifying God but delivering justice. These three thinkers focuses little or not at all on the importance of liberating people from conditions producing suffering. As I believe, theodicy should offer an effective strategy on the problems of the suffering, such as, political oppression, economical iniquity, and socio-cultural discrimination. A successful resolution of theodicy not only explains how evil is reconcilable with the belief in God or the meaning of suffering, but also must demonstrate how to effectively surmount the evils in society.

⁸⁶. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 155.

Chapter 5 Process Praxis Theodicy

Social Location of Process Theology and the Problem of Theory and Praxis

The dialogue between process scholars and liberation theologians began in the early 1980's. Although process thought primarily focuses on metaphysics, process scholars have been interested in social and political issues in the contemporary world. They are open to liberation theology and want to have conversation with liberation theologians, since process theologians have seen a great deal of interconnectedness between the two theologies. However, many liberation theologians are hesitant to have as close a connection with process theology. This hesitance is mainly attributed to two reasons: the social location of process thought and ideological critics.

Liberation theologians suppose that process theology would support the oppressors of the dominant Western society and would eventually sustain the system that oppressed the suffering people in the third world countries. In addition, liberation theologians have a negative sense that process thought is primarily engaged in metaphysical theory rather than the *praxis* of liberation. On the other hand, process theologians are mainly concerned with the lack of theoretical foundation of liberation theology.

Joseph A. Bracken rightly states:

Paradoxically, despite their common interest in creative transformation of the existing social order, adherents of the two theologies have had little contact with one another. Process thinkers have been perhaps too much occupied with the solution of

broad metaphysical questions connected with the creation of a new God-world relationship and too little concerned with the day-to-day problems of people in contemporary society. Liberation theologians, on the other hand, have been so involved in their group's struggle for freedom and equality that they have effectively neglected the deeper theoretical implications of their new *praxis*-orientation to theology.¹

The dominant social setting of process thought is white, middle class, and mostly male scholars in the United States.² This social location hinders for liberation theologians from having an open conversation with process theologians. John B. Cobb, Jr. does not consider that this social location is just accidental. He thoughtfully reflects and criticizes the intellectual social location of process thought from inside. While Cobb fully acknowledges the social location of process theology, he humbly uses the word of "repentance" as a contact point between the two theologies. Cobb states, "One point of contact between process theology and liberation theology depends on repentance on the part of process theologians."³ This repentance is probably about their negligence of the oppressed people represented by liberation theologians.

¹. Joseph A. Bracken, "Faith and Justice: A New Synthesis? The Interface of Process and Liberation Theologies," *Process Studies* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 73.

². John B. Cobb Jr., "Points of Contact between Process Theology and Liberation Theology in Matters of Faith and Justice," *Process Studies* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 124.

³. Cobb, "Points of Contact between Process Theology and Liberation Theology in Matters of Faith and Justice," 126.

However, Cobb does not say that process theology is just another form of previous western theology, which primarily supports the oppressors of contemporary society. He states, "Whitehead provided us with a model of occasions of human experience that makes clear that their content is provided by the societies out of which they come into being. They are conditioned through and through by their actual worlds. But they are not simply determined by these worlds. There is always a transcendent element and a moment of self-determination."⁴ Since the self-determining power of the actual entity becomes the element of the transcending power of an individual above its social environments, Cobb declares that process thought attempts to transcend its social location and makes efforts to bring about social justice in the world. Griffin also states, "Although an individual is largely a product of its society, creative individuals who especially transcend the influence of their society can exert an influence back on it and thereby transform it."⁵ Although human thought is affected by social background, it is not totally determined by environments. An actual entity always has some transcendent factor in itself. Process theologians acknowledge the social location of process thought in the dominant Western society that can easily disregard

4. Cobb, "Points of Contact between Process Theology and Liberation Theology in Matters of Faith and Justice," 126.

5. David Ray Griffin. "Values, Evil, and Liberation Theology." *Encounter* 40, no. 1 (Winter 1979): 4.

afflictions of people in the oppressed countries. However, based on Whitehead's relational idea between individual and surroundings, Cobb and other process scholars make efforts to overcome the social location of process thought and try to have solidarity with the oppressed in the deprived world.

In terms of ideology critics, liberation theologians are concerned about a conceptual metaphysical method, as an attempt to apply any conceptual theory to concrete situations. Metaphysics in general presents an elaborate scheme of the world, and this universal metaphysical system applies to particular circumstances. This metaphysical method would never be accepted by liberation theologians, although they might admit the need of a solid theoretical foundation for the liberation movement. Gustavo Gutierrez states, "The theology of liberation attempts to reflect on the experience and meaning of the faith based on the commitment to abolish injustice and to build a new society; this theology must be verified by the practice of that commitment, by active, effective participation in the struggle which the exploited social classes have undertaken against their oppressors."⁶ There is enough reason for liberation theologians to abandon any approach of starting from theory and applying to *praxis*. Historically metaphysical systems or theological schemes prior to *praxis*

⁶. Gustavo Gutierrez, *The Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, trans. Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973), 307.

have played a function in sustaining groups that represent the oppressors. Bracken rightly states, "Reason...was not employed to transform the structures of society in the direction of a more humane and just social order, but was instead coopted to justify various power interests profiting by the status quo."⁷ In other words, privileged governing power groups have taken advantage of a theoretical system in order to rule over the people on behalf of governing groups in most cases.

Process scholars also acknowledge the malfunction of metaphysics in general. However, they claim that process metaphysics is different from previous metaphysics that supported the oppressors of societies. Unlike other traditional metaphysics, Whitehead's metaphysics projects a relational vision of wholeness, which applies to God all the way down to minute creatures. Cobb states, "The society both liberation theologians and process theologians want is one in which health and growth are developed from the bottom up, enabling peasant communities to determine their own destinies instead of manipulating them for the sake of urban-industrial development."⁸ Whitehead's metaphysics also does not defy *praxis* for social justice, since Whitehead's nondualistic way of thought can be applied to the indispensable relationship between *praxis*

⁷. Bracken, "Faith and Justice," 74.

⁸. Cobb, "Points of Contact between Process Theology and Liberation Theology in Matters of Faith and Justice," 137-38.

and theory. Many process theologians would agree with the essential relationship between theory and *praxis* at least in principle.

In the formation of Whitehead's theodicy, it is important to note that Whitehead not only has philosophical concerns for the problem of evil, but also has concerns of *praxis* for the suffering world. Cobb explains, "Whitehead, for example, did deal at some length with the questions of equality and freedom, and the latter topic [justice], at least, has been a common one in process thought."⁹ In other words, Whitehead does not simply present a coherent metaphysical understanding of evil, but he is also concerned with concrete matters of evils in the world. For example, Whitehead speaks of the indifference and ignorance resulting from the industrial revolution as an instance of evil. In the discussion of the early industrial revolution in *Science and the Modern World*, Whitehead witnesses that the workers in the industrial revolution period were regarded as "mere hands."¹⁰ He also mentions the harmful manipulation of material power as an example of the evils. Whitehead states, "The evils of the future have been diagnosed in various ways, the loss of religious faith, the malignant use of material power, the degradation attending a differential birth rate favouring the lower types of humanity, the

⁹. Cobb, "Points of Contact between Process Theology and Liberation Theology in Matters of Faith and Justice," 130.

¹⁰. Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Free Press, 1967), 203.

suppression of aesthetic creativeness.”¹¹ In *Religion in the Making*, comparing between Buddhism and Christian in regards to the problem of evil, Whitehead states that Buddhism basically concerns metaphysical theory, while Christianity emphasizes practical responses to suffering.¹² In mentioning of the two approaches, Whitehead makes a point that persons dealing with the problem of evil must go beyond mere fulfillment of rational interest, and propose general principles of behaviors for overcoming the reality of evil. In *Adventures of Ideas*, Whitehead does not understand the theodicy problem as a mere metaphysical matter, either. For example, the slavery system of ancient civilization is an example of evil based on iniquity.¹³ Although the feudal system has been somewhat effective in establishing “free persuasion” and proposes some novelty based on technology, Whitehead also understands that the feudal system is an example of evil as in the case of ancient civilization.¹⁴

It is a common idea for liberation theology that there is an indispensable relationship between concrete evils and the social system. Interestingly enough, Whitehead also emphasizes the close relationship between concrete evil facts and the social organization because existing

¹¹. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 204.

¹². Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1996), 51-52.

¹³. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Free Press, 1961), 14.

¹⁴. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 84.

evils pretty much depend on the social organization. Whitehead states, "It may be impossible to conceive a reorganization of society adequate for the removal of some admitted evil without destroying the social organization and the civilization which depends on it."¹⁵ In other words, he maintains that evil facts would hardly be abolished, unless the social organization itself would be abolished. Since *Process and Reality* does not show many practical and social issues to the problem of evil, modern process thinkers presupposed that Whitehead did not have much concern for the social and practical dimensions of the problem of evil. However, the above instances of concrete evils indicate that Whitehead's understanding of the problem of evil is located in the concrete situation of human suffering as well as his metaphysical theory.

Following Whitehead's relational way of thought, John B. Cobb, Jr. also speaks of the close connection between *praxis* and theory. His methodology of the dialogue between process theology and liberation theology is similar to his approach of inter-religious dialogue as well as relevant to his attitude toward feminist theology and black theology. Cobb shows a warm-hearted open mindedness and is eager to listen and learn from voices of various traditions, cultures, and parties. His truly open mind to other traditions enables him to enter into an authentic conversation with dialogue partners. Cobb suggests that one should open

¹⁵. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 20.

his/her mind in order to hear and learn from others who have different traditions. This hearing and learning is not just for better understanding of other traditions, but also for "mutual transformation."¹⁶ The uniqueness of Cobb's dialogue toward other traditions is to propose the opportunity for the transformation of both sides of the dialogue partners. Cobb states, "To hear in an authentic way the truth which the other has to teach us is to be transformed by that truth."¹⁷ Mutual transformation presupposes that every tradition is always in process, influenced by being interrelated to others. In other words, transformation opens the gate for the future and generates creativity in and through the encounter with other traditions. Cobb states, "If we can avoid absolutizing our own way of seeing and learn from others what they have seen, we have the possibility of enlarging and enriching our perspective and moving toward greater adequacy to what is there to be seen."¹⁸ He believes that an opened conversation between two different parties can enrich each party. With a humble attitude, Cobb is willing to listen and to learn what liberation theologians have to offer.

¹⁶. John B. Cobb, *Beyond Dialogue* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 48.

¹⁷. Cobb, *Beyond Dialogue*, ix.

¹⁸. Cobb, "Points of Contact between Process Theology and Liberation Theology in Matters of Faith and Justice," 136.

Although Cobb has a positive attitude toward liberation theology, Cobb does not identify himself as either a liberation theologian, a black theologian, or a feminist theologian. In one sense, this is a very polite attitude toward society, culture, race, and gender. Since Cobb acknowledges that he cannot fully experience the agony and affliction of the oppressed, he humbly wants to learn and repents of his deep-seated tendencies, which come with being a part of a dominant Western society. On the other hand, however, this attitude is rather perilous in the sense of how someone can effectively participate in the situation of the oppressed in deprived countries, if one does not identify oneself with the oppressed. Cobb states, "Nevertheless, identification with the oppressed is a real option for them in a way it is not for most white North American theologians."¹⁹ According to the context of this sentence, most process theologians, including Cobb, do not think that "identification with the oppressed is a real option" for the western scholars. Because Cobb cannot be a Buddhist or a Hindu as a result of religious dialogue, he refuses to identify himself as a liberation theologian, although he has sympathy with the liberation movement. An important question here is: can process theologians really have solidarity with oppressed people in the deprived countries without the identification with the poor? The

¹⁹. Cobb, "Points of Contact between Process Theology and Liberation Theology in Matters of Faith and Justice," 127.

answer seems not to be clear. Cobb states, "What is possible for us is to take seriously what is said by those who speak from the side of oppressed groups, to do what we can to make sure their voices are heard, and to try to adjust our own living and thinking to make them more appropriate to what we have learned. In this sense we can all become political theologians."²⁰ There is no doubt that Cobb has compassion for the oppressed groups and tries to amend his thought and behaviors on behalf of the oppressed people. However, Cobb's methodology of "listening, learning, and enriching each other" might have some limitation in the active participation of liberating the oppressed since he fails to identify himself with the oppressed people in the deprived countries.

In Cobb's dialogue methodology between process theology and liberation theology, I see two possible dangers. First of all, there is a problem of conversational means, i.e. language barriers. In a scholarly dialogue table, someone whose native language is English often takes for granted that he should utilize English as his primary conversational tool. One hardly imagines that an English native speaker speaks or listens in Spanish, Portuguese, or Eastern languages in the dialogue between liberation theology and western theology, including process theology. This is not a fair starting point for a genuine dialogue for someone who is willing to listen and learn other voices. In the dialogue between process

²⁰. Cobb, "Points of Contact between Process Theology and Liberation Theology in Matters of Faith and Justice," 127.

theology and womanist theology, the situation is much better, because dialogue partners can be composed of native English scholars, who can fully communicate with each other. However, it still remains a problem. Can a white, middle class North American womanist process theologian fully represent the deprived women who live in a robust hierarchical society of the third world countries? It is not difficult to imagine that the suffering of a woman living in the Western society is quite different from the suffering of a woman living in a third world society. Although women in general are victims from hierarchical systems, the women in the deprived countries would suffer more severely than women in the first world countries because of the more severely devastated system that is present in the third world countries. I suspect that Cobb's methodology of listening and learning toward other traditions might be jeopardized in the sense that scholars in the first world countries already had a great advantage even before entering into dialogue.

Second, Cobb's listening and learning methodology still emphasizes theory prior to *praxis*. Instead of the phrase "listening and learning," liberation theologians would like to choose a phrase "experiencing and learning" or more specifically "participating and learning." Since liberation theologians always emphasize *praxis* prior to theory, they would not be likely to come in a discussion table without some hesitation.

Accordingly, one of the main controversial issues between process theology and liberation theology is the relationship between theory and *praxis*. There would be no disagreement between process theologians and liberation theologians saying that one needs both theoretical foundation and *praxis* of liberation. Even liberation theologians as well as process theologians would say that there should be a close relationship between theory and *praxis*. The issue between theory and *praxis* is not selecting one thing against the other. What matters for liberation theologians is whether one has a priority of *praxis* of liberating the oppressed prior to establishing a theory or not. Matthew L Lamb criticizes any traditional attempts that do not started from *praxis* as "conceptualistic narcissism."²¹

The hesitancy of liberation theologians to engage in dialogue is not because process theologians do not seriously consider the liberation of the oppressed in the world, but because they have the propensity of starting from reason or theory and applying it to the concrete suffering situations. In order to emphasize *praxis* rather than theory, liberation theologians often use the phrase "liberation movement" rather than "liberation theology." Lamb states, "Liberation theologies as a movement -- and I should emphasize that these theologies are aspects of a

²¹. Matthew L. Lamb, "Liberation Theology and Social Justice," *Process Studies* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 104.

movement, not some closed conceptualistic system -- have tended to avoid such intramural debates."²² The simplest elucidation of liberation movement is: act first, and reflect later. Cobb rightly states, "[T]he [liberation] theologian thinks about God, Christ, and the church as these topics arise in the analysis of the social situation and in action aimed at justice. Doctrines are tested in practice and reformulated in the light of their effects and their illuminating and motivating power."²³ Liberation theologians have ardently emphasized the methodology of starting from the *praxis* of liberation against any attempt at applying a theological or philosophical system to the afflicted circumstances. Gutierrez states, "Theology as a critical reflection on Christian *praxis* in the light of the Word does not replace the other functions of theology, such as wisdom and rational knowledge; rather it presupposes and needs them."²⁴ Without a priority of *praxis*, liberation theologians can never come a dialogue table, although they would admit the need of a theoretical ground for reinforcing the liberation movement. Lamb states, "liberation theologies insist that only a liberative and transformative *praxis* actually *converting* or *changing* our contemporary world (and churches within that world)

²². Lamb, "Liberation Theology and Social Justice," 104.

²³. Cobb, "Points of Contact between Process Theology and Liberation Theology in Matters of Faith and Justice," 128.

²⁴. Gutierrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 13.

provides criteria for whatever adequacy and truth theological concepts may have."²⁵ No liberation theologians would accept any attempt without the priority of *praxis* against theory.

Although scholars in the western society generally have a propensity of placing theory before *praxis*, Cobb declaims that the *praxis* of liberation should have priority above theoretical efforts for social justice. Cobb states:

Intellectual credibility is not unimportant, but when it is bought at the price of neglecting concrete suffering caused by the lifestyle in which the thinkers are themselves involved, something has gone profoundly wrong. If Christians must choose between thinking clearly and relating rightly to human suffering, they must choose the latter. The justification for devoting ourselves to the former must finally be that it helps in the latter task.²⁶

Using the terminology of liberation theology, theology should be "contextualized" in the concrete situation. Lamb states, "A key issue in comparing process theology and liberation theology would be the fundamental import of *contextualization* in liberation theology."²⁷ In this sense, the preference of *praxis* prior to theory is a real contact point in the dialogue between process theology and liberation theology.

²⁵. Lamb, "Liberation Theology and Social Justice," 104.

²⁶. Cobb, "Points of Contact between Process Theology and Liberation Theology in Matters of Faith and Justice," 128.

²⁷. Lamb, "Liberation Theology and Social Justice," 115.

Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki introduces the Whitehead's conception of feeling in order to explain the relationship between theory and *praxis*. She states:

Since relationships are themselves mediated through feeling, one can say also that feeling gives rise to thought. From the intensity and complexity of the many feelings in the depths of us, thought is pushed into existence. For example, to understand what happens in love and in grief, I must not abstract myself from my experience, but think my way into my feelings, wherein lies the source of thought. From feeling, thought emerges.²⁸

Suchocki explains that the experience of feeling is the source of thought. Since thought cannot be separated from the experience of feeling, the theory of thought should be rooted in concrete experiences. In the relationship between *praxis* and theory, Whitehead's idea of feeling bestows the priority of *praxis* of liberation prior to philosophical theory. Lamb states, "If understanding precedes and grounds conceptual expressions, then the primary concern must be to attend intelligently and responsibly to the concrete contexts in which conceptual expressions are elaborated."²⁹ In order to establish a Whiteheadian process *praxis* theodicy, I claim that one should acknowledge the priority of *praxis* prior to theoretical foundation, although there is an indispensable relationship between *praxis* and theory.

²⁸. Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki. "Weaving the World." *Process Studies* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 82.

²⁹. Lamb, "Liberation Theology and Social Justice," 115.

Praxis toward Political and Economic Liberation and Praxis toward Cultural
and Ecological Liberation

The dimension of liberation is manifold: political, economical, social, cultural, and ecological. Liberation theologians and process theologians would agree that these factors of liberation should be considered all together because all know the multiple phases of human life as well as the lives of other creatures. Generally speaking, however, liberation theologians mostly dedicated their lives to the political and economical aspects of liberation, whereas process theologians have devoted themselves to the cultural and ecological dimensions of liberation. Cobb says, "There is little doubt that the concern for cultures and religions expresses the middle class social location of most process theologians, whereas the focus on political and economic issues and the concomitant demand for justice express the identification with the poor that is the glory of liberation theology."³⁰ The different emphasis on the dimension of liberation created a difficulty in the dialogue between the two theologies, albeit they all admit the need to attend to the diverse aspects of liberation. Cobb states, "There have been tensions between those who saw the basic issue as the exploitation of the poor and those who emphasized the destruction of the environment. The former rightly saw

³⁰. Cobb, "Points of Contact between Process Theology and Liberation Theology in Matters of Faith and Justice," 133.

that the latter were mostly middle class."³¹ While process theologians note that liberation theologians narrowly emphasize the political and economical aspects of liberation, they suggest that other dimensions of liberation such as cultural and ecological aspects of liberation should be emphasized at the same time. Cobb states, "[W]e are forced to witness to our conviction that not only human beings but also all things, especially all living things, are of worth both to themselves and to God regardless of whether they are of worth to human beings. We cannot surrender this perspective because of the charge that it is middle class."³² For liberation theologians, the emphasis on the ecological aspect of liberation would not be a problem, either. They also acknowledge that this world is not just for special deprived groups but for all humanity and every life in nature. No liberation theologians agree that the only aspect of liberation is economical or political liberation for the oppressed. The destruction of ecological environment in the third world countries is not attributed to the negligence of liberation theologians but is in fact related to the U.S. foreign economical development policy. Gutierrez states, "It must be studied from a historical perspective, that is, in relationship to the development and expansion of the great capitalist countries. The

³¹. Cobb, "Points of Contact between Process Theology and Liberation Theology in Matters of Faith and Justice," 137.

³². Cobb, "Points of Contact between Process Theology and Liberation Theology in Matters of Faith and Justice," 138.

underdevelopment of the poor countries, as an overall social fact, appears in its true light: as the historical by-product of the development of other countries."³³ Liberation theologians acknowledge the whole dimension of liberation, which contains social, cultural, and ecological liberation as well as economical and political liberation. Lamb speaks of diverse dimensions of liberation, such as "the social injustices of classism, sexism, racism, technocentrism, and militarism."³⁴ In his explanation of technocentrism, he focuses on the ecological dimension of liberation. Gutierrez, who is one of the originators of liberation theology, also mentioned the various dimensions of liberation from his earlier book. Although liberation theologians have emphasized the political and economical aspects, they have known of the diverse dimensions of liberation from the beginning.

The fundamental issue between political-economical liberation and cultural or ecological liberation is not that liberation theologians disregard diverse aspects of liberation. There would be no disagreement that the liberation of life should be directed at all types of the oppressed situations in principle. However, liberation theologians practically have focused more on the dimension of political and economical aspects than other aspects of liberation. Because of this, Cobb suggests that liberation

³³. Gutierrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 84.

³⁴. Lamb, "Liberation Theology and Social Justice," 111.

theologians need to consider broader perspectives of liberation such as ecological or cultural. Cobb states, "There is no conflict between an emphasis on the liberation of the poor and on the preservation and restoration of the land from which they and their descendants must live."³⁵ For Cobb, the political-economical liberation and ecological liberation is like the two sides of the same coin. Cobb continues to say, "When we adopt as our goal a sustainable as well as a just society, then there are far fewer instances in which there is marked opposition between the interests of the poor and of the whole biosphere."³⁶ In most cases, Cobb's judgment regarding the necessary cooperative relationship between political-economical liberation and ecological liberation goes without saying. However, once one meets a conflict situation between the political-economical liberation and ecological liberation, one has to think about the priority of liberation. In other words, in the relationship among diverse dimensions of liberation, the real issue that matters is whether political and economical liberation for the oppressed has priority over social, cultural, or ecological liberation or not. The issue is not the selection or exclusion of one against the other, but is the priority of one in relation to the other. I suggest that there is a priority of political-economical liberation

³⁵. Cobb, "Points of Contact between Process Theology and Liberation Theology in Matters of Faith and Justice," 137.

³⁶. Cobb, "Points of Contact between Process Theology and Liberation Theology in Matters of Faith and Justice," 139.

in relation to cultural or ecological liberation in some cases, although most circumstances work out together without conflict.

Let's imagine that there would be a fire in the San Bernardino Mountains. Firefighters are trying to save people in the mountains, their property, living animals, and the forest itself. They will make every effort to extinguish fire in order to save people and their property in the threatened area and in order to protect living nature, which can offer a better environment to human beings. From a philanthropic perspective, it is also important to save living creatures as well as human beings. However, here one meets a problem of priority of liberation. Suchocki states, "To be sure, the effect is variable in impact and in importance, and we grade the order of importance according to our own purposes and proximities. A mother is far more important to us than, for example, some tree a continent or so away."³⁷ For example, although firefighters are willing to preserve natural surroundings, they do not make efforts to move out living plants to a safe place together with saving people. Probably firefighters are trying to make an escaping route for animals, if they have a chance.

Without a notion of urgency for the oppressed in the deprived countries, attempting to give equal efforts to ecological concern as well as economical and political concern seems to me much like that one performs saving human beings and replanting trees at the same time

³⁷. Suchocki, "Weaving the World," 81.

while fighting a mountain fire. My argument is not saying that ecological concern is not important, or ecological liberation and political-economical liberation are not interrelated. In most cases, the economical liberation and ecological liberation go together because human beings and other creatures are indispensably interrelated. My claim is, however, the politico-economical liberation sometimes should have priority in relation to other aspects of liberation. If one seriously considers the solidarity of the oppressed in the deprived countries, one must participate in the political and economical disasters with a notion of urgency. Jon Sobrino states:

If I remember right, when Freud identified the libido as the fundamental human energy, Ernst Bloch replied that Freud could say that because his stomach was full. Simone de Beauvoir tells in her memoirs about a similar observation by Simone Weil. Simone Weil told her that the historical task of their time was 'a revolution that would give everyone enough to eat.' De Beauvoir replied that the problem was not giving them food, but giving meaning to their existence. She reports that Weil 'silenced me by saying. 'It's easy to see that you've never been hungry.'³⁸

For example, although the GNP in Korea is going up, the distribution of the goods and services are getting worse in recent days. According to a report of Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs in Korea,³⁹ one percent of population controlled 57 percents of the whole private land in South Korea in 2005, private land that symbolizes wealth

³⁸. Jon Sobrino, *Where Is God?*, trans. Margaret Wilde (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 126.

³⁹. www.mogaha.go.kr

and power. Seven point five percent of the population own 71.8 percent of the whole private land in the country. Over ninety percent of the population that exceeds 40 million is struggling to share the rest of the land and wealth. As a result, many people have committed suicide, only because they could not provide a house rent fee for their family. This is a typical example of economical situations that one must consider with the solidarity with the oppressed in the deprived countries. It is not difficult to imagine that the so-called third world countries in Latin America, Africa, and southeastern Asia are much more severe than South Korea. In Chile, for example, only two percent of the population possesses 98 percents of the private land of the country. This is the general economical situation in the third world countries. It is really hard to ask liberation theologians to see the crisis of economy and the crisis of ecology in the same light, if one acknowledges the political or economical situation in the third world countries.

In the United States, the political and economical situation is quite different, although there are definitely racial, sexual, and ecological problems. Whereas Cobb pays attention to the political and economical crisis of the third world countries to some degree, his theological concern focuses much more on the cultural and ecological dimension of liberation. Regarding the relationship between political-economical liberation and ecological liberation, Cobb says, "The earlier tendency to dismiss these

questions as irrelevant to the 'truly urgent' issues is fading."⁴⁰ As seen in Cobb's later works, his theology gives attention to ecological liberation without much concern to the political-economical liberation in the third world countries. Liberation theologians might feel that this ecological emphasis is more concerned with saving animals and plants than saving suffering people. Cobb's approach to ecological liberation is difficult to accept by liberation theologians. I am not saying that to make a better world for the global community and for the future generation is not important or not urgent. My argument is, if one really considers the solidarity of the oppressed especially in the deprived countries, one should seriously respond and participate in those political and economical afflictions with urgency. Bracken rightly states, "[P]rocess thinkers, if they are to have any real impact on the contemporary scene, must come to grips with the urgent social justice issues raised by liberation theologians."⁴¹ To treat equally the crisis of political-economic situation and the crisis of cultural-ecological situation seems to me a retreat from the responsibility for the oppressed in the deprived countries. As one who lives in a global society, one should not consider the suffering voices in the third world countries as voices of others, but as voices of our own. One

⁴⁰. Cobb, "Points of Contact between Process Theology and Liberation Theology in Matters of Faith and Justice," 134.

⁴¹. Bracken, "Faith and Justice," 75.

should give priority to the political-economical dimension of liberation over the cultural or ecological dimension of liberation in certain cases, although all dimensions of liberation are heavily interrelated.

The Problem of the Theoretical Foundation of the Liberation Movement

One of the main criticisms toward liberation theology is its lack of a solid theoretical foundation. Since liberation theologians have emphasized the *praxis* of liberation for the oppressed, they have often intentionally disregarded any kind of theological theories. This aggressive tactic accelerated solidarity with the oppressed in the deprived countries at the beginning of the liberation movement. Claiming the *praxis* of liberation prior to theory, liberation theologians have vigorously dedicated themselves to the oppressed and have seen significant achievements in their movement.

As time goes on, however, a feeble theoretical foundation of the liberation movement hinders the continuing development of liberation theology. People who are involved in the liberation movement have started to notice the difficulty that comes from getting lost in the vitality of their movement and as a result, have become drained in the very field where they made such strong efforts on behalf of the oppressed. This predicament of the liberation movement is mainly attributed to its feeble theoretical foundation in relation to the *praxis* of liberation. According to Schubert M. Ogden, the problem of liberation theology is that "insufficient

attention has been paid to the metaphysical aspect of the question."⁴²

Bracken also states, "Liberation theologians...have thus far paid too little attention to the 'cosmic' dimensions of their own movement(s)."⁴³ Since liberation theologians have dedicated themselves to the liberation of the oppressed for over thirty years, they had to reflect the *praxis* of their liberation movement.

If one admits a theoretical crisis in the liberation movement, the philosophy of Whitehead can efficiently proffer some beneficial theoretical strength to liberation theology. Cobb states, "process theologians hope to offer philosophical undergirding and enrichment [to liberation theology]."⁴⁴ The theoretical reflection, however, is not a return from *praxis* to theory at all. Reflection should be located in the ground of the *praxis* of liberation. Bracken rightly states, "[L]iberation theologians should take seriously the metaphysical framework for a *praxis*-oriented theology implicitly offered to them by process theology."⁴⁵ Suchocki also states, "While there is a sense of *praxis* -- that theology emerges out of right action -- in all three modes of liberation theology, there is also the

⁴². Schubert M. Ogden. "The Metaphysics of Faith and Justice." *Process Studies* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 87.

⁴³. Bracken, "Faith and Justice," 74.

⁴⁴. Cobb, "Points of Contact between Process Theology and Liberation Theology in Matters of Faith and Justice," 139.

⁴⁵. Bracken, "Faith and Justice," 75.

awareness that right action is called right on the basis of a preceding vision of justice."⁴⁶ While liberation theologians maintain the priority of *praxis*, they can be aided by a process theology that offers a strong theoretical basis for the *praxis* of the liberation movement. Without denying the priority of *praxis*, liberation theologians should consider the theoretical reflection of *praxis* for the further growth of the liberation movement.

The theoretical impediment of the liberation movement is demonstrated in two aspects: theoretical inconsistency of liberation theology and lack of new visions for a liberated society. In fact, the internal theoretical inconsistency of liberation theology did not cause severe problems in the liberation movement. The more severe problem of liberation theology is that liberation theologians could not present a new vision for a just society. As a result, they have lost the strength of their movement little by little.

First of all, liberation theology does not have a well-established theological system, since they do not presume that the theological foundation of liberation movement is as important as the *praxis* of liberation. In terms of the idea of God, for example, liberation theologians primarily depict God as the everlasting source of the liberation movement. They emphasize two aspects of God in relation to God the ultimate

⁴⁶. Suchocki, "Weaving the World," 77.

source of liberation: the omnipotent God and the passionate God.

Highlighting these characteristics of God seems to be a natural outcome because liberation theologians wanted to illustrate that God participates in the suffering of the oppressed, and God finally brings about the victory of the liberation movement without doubt. Griffin states, "In his earlier book, *Theology of Hope*, Moltmann defined unbelief as doubt of God's omnipotence. James Cone, in his later book, *God of the Oppressed*, says we must see God as 'unquestionably in control of history.'"⁴⁷ From a process perspective, the idea of omnipotence contains a theoretical inconsistency in relation to the autonomy of the actual entity. Griffin continues to say, "[T]his is clearly unsatisfactory; God is the God of truth, including our ordinary logical procedures for discovering truth, as well as the God of justice."⁴⁸ The problem is, without a theoretical clarification, liberation theologians utilized some traditional conceptions of God that hindered their liberation movement. Traditional conception of the omnipotent God cannot be accepted, because it is not compatible with the genuine freedom of the actual entity. However, this kind of internal theoretical inconsistency did not restrict the liberation movement, as much as Griffin presumes.

⁴⁷. Griffin, "Values, Evil, and Liberation Theology," 10.

⁴⁸. Griffin, "Values, Evil, and Liberation Theology," 11.

The lack of a new vision for a liberated society in the liberation movement is more severe problem than the lack of its strong internal theoretical foundation. After obtaining political liberation in many third world countries during the 1980s, the liberation movement was mostly enfeebled or collapsed because of the lack of new visions for a new society. Liberation theologians simply did not know what they should do for the next level of *praxis* of liberation, after gaining political freedom against a military government.

Although Minjung theologians, for example, had great success in the Minjung movement for over thirty years, one hardly sees any notable Minjung movements or active Minjung theologians nowadays in Korea. Like Latin American liberation theology, Minjung theology came alive in the world in the early 1970s. In the period of the Minjung movement between 1970 and 1990, many theologians came out from a desk to the street and became advocates for the oppressed Minjung. They inspired the Minjung to protect their freedom and rights against the power of the oppressors, and aggressively protested against the unauthorized military government. The success of liberation movement in Korea did not happen without a great deal of efforts and sacrifices. A lot of Minjung theologians went to a jail for years, were tortured, and were even killed. In 1986, however, the Minjung movement along with other social movements in Korea had a significant victory against the military

government and finally established a democratic government for the first time in Korean history. In 1990, one of the civil movement leaders became president, and one of the Minjung theologians also became vice-prime minister. This was a great political achievement of the Minjung movement against the military government.

After the military government was overturned, the situation of Minjung theology drastically changed. Previously liberation theologians primarily made political efforts with Minjung for the subversion of the unauthorized military government, which was an easy visible target of attack. From 1990, however, liberation theologians and other civil leaders more or less had to rule over the country with new visions for the politically liberated society. The problem for new civil leaders and liberation theologians was that they could not present any new promising visions for a new society. Although new civil leaders as well as Minjung theologians had made a lot of effort for a just society, they had to suffer the repetition of trials and errors. As a result, the Minjung in Korea did not give much credibility to this new government, although the new government was composed of people who were enormously dedicated to the Minjung. According to the Korea Society Opinion Institute, only 16.8 percents of the population supports the current government as of October 12, 2006.⁴⁹

⁴⁹. <http://www.ksoi.org>

One of the reasons for this failure is that there has been a strong resistance from the conservative force, which obtained much political and economical benefit from the previous military government. However, the more important reason for the failure of liberation theologians as well as civil movement leaders is attributed to their feeble philosophical foundation for a newly ordered society. Since Minjung theologians and other social movement groups focused too much on the political dimension of liberation, they failed to propose a new vision of a politically liberated society in Korea.

Interestingly enough, the crisis of Minjung liberation theology, which could not propose a new promising vision of a just society, is not just a unique problem to Korea. Latin America liberation theologians and other Asian liberation theologians also have a problem of providing a vision for a politically liberated society. During the mid-1980s, a lot of developing countries in Latin America and Asia were able to replace their governors from military generals to well-known leaders of civil movements. This drastic worldwide conversion is partly due to the alteration of the U.S. government foreign policy toward the third world countries. As Minjung theologians primarily made effort political freedom in Korea, liberation theologians in the third world countries mostly focused on replacing their military leaders until the mid-1980s. Once they gained political power, new civil leaders and liberation theologians had to govern the politically

liberated society more or less. Unfortunately, the same impediment presented itself in these third world countries as in Korea. They could not propose fresh visions for a new society

The difficulty of presenting a new vision for a new society is attributed to the monistic worldview of the liberation movement. From the beginning of the liberation movement, liberation theologians aggressively denied a traditional dualistic worldview, which is attributed to mainline Protestant and Catholic theology embedded in the Western society. Since traditional dualism emphasizes the world in heaven and deemphasizes the liberation of current world suffering, liberation theologians aggressively abandoned the traditional dualism. However, by replacing dualism, liberation theologians accepted the social analysis of Karl Marx, which is based on materialism. Cobb states, "Liberation theology has participated in the Marxist critique of ideology as a way of thought that rationalizes and justifies the economic and political interests of a dominant class."⁵⁰ Marx's critique of ideology results in a monistic worldview of materialism. Influenced by class theory, they focus on the materialistic liberation of proletariats against the bourgeoisie. Accordingly, liberation theologians more or less understand that this materialistic world that contains no transcendent function is the only genuine world.

⁵⁰. Cobb, "Points of Contact between Process Theology and Liberation Theology in Matters of Faith and Justice," 134.

Gutierrez states, "What we have recalled in the preceding paragraph leads us to affirm that, in fact, there are not two histories, one profane and one sacred."⁵¹ The materialistic worldview of liberation theology applies to every theological aspect. The meaning of salvation becomes liberation for the oppressed in this world, and the kingdom of God only refers to the reign of God in this world. Since the role of religion is restricted to this-worldly matter, the participants of the liberation movement were getting lost in their transcendent dimension of life. Since Gutierrez noticed that people were losing the vitality of the social movement, he also speaks of the importance of spirituality.⁵² However, spirituality in Gutierrez's thought only indicates a source of an enthusiastic drive for the liberation movement. In other words, spirituality for him is in the context of a materialistic worldview. The monistic worldview makes a trouble for liberation theologians in presenting a new vision for the whole community.

In opposition to the monistic worldview, Whitehead presents a vision of a nondualistic worldview, which rejects both dualism and monism. Process theologians and liberation theologians are in agreement in rejecting the traditional dualism, which easily disregards responsibility to our current life. Both theologies would agree that there are not two

⁵¹. Gutierrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 153.

⁵². See Gustavo Gutierrez. *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1984).

histories, which means a rejection of dualism. However, process theologians also reject the materialistic monism of liberation theology. Whereas liberation theologians disregard the dimension of history of the sacred and conclude that the history of the profane is the only genuine history, process theologians proclaim that there is an indispensable relationship between the profane history and the sacred history. This is a fundamental difference between process theology and liberation theology.

For example, Whitehead understands that the kingdom of God is not just above the world or is not just the current world. In *Adventures of Ideas*, Whitehead critically states the dualistic Platonic-Christian understanding of the kingdom of God. He admits that Plato partly had a dualistic worldview that abandoned this world and sought another world. However, Whitehead insists that Plato also envisioned the perfect world in heaven as a direct realization in the temporal world. Whitehead states, "He [Plato] conceives the perfect Republic in Heaven as an immediate present possession in the consciousness of the wise in the temporal world. Thus for Plato, the joy of heaven is realizable on earth."⁵³ Therefore, on the one hand, Whitehead rejects the traditional understanding of the heavenly world, which is disconnected with this temporal world. On the other hand, he also denies a materialistic utopia of the temporal world, which is

⁵³. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 32.

disconnected from the world in heaven. Whitehead's notion of the kingdom of God is closely related to his understanding of history. Although the adventure toward harmony will finally come true in the future as a result of responses of the actual entity to God's ideal aims, the present can see part of the victory against the evil in the world. The history of the world is the history of "overcoming evil by good" progressively.⁵⁴

The materialistic worldview based on Marxist social analysis in liberation theology also makes an issue whether the final goal of the liberation movement is the so called "solidarity with a poor" or "harmonizing all interests."⁵⁵ The liberation movement focuses on the identification with the poor, whereas process theology presents the identification with all humanity, including other creatures. Suchocki states, "All feminists, of whatever camp, seek both to understand the world and to change the world, working from a criterion of wholeness and the interdependence of all on this earth."⁵⁶ In some sense, solidarity with the poor or the preferential option for the poor can be a great tactical strategy in the deprived countries because the distribution of wealth in those countries is severely bad. However, solidarity with a poor influenced by Marxist class theory cannot be an ultimate vision for a just society

⁵⁴. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 155.

⁵⁵. Cobb, "Points of Contact between Process Theology and Liberation Theology in Matters of Faith and Justice," 132.

⁵⁶. Suchocki, "Weaving the World," 78.

because it does not include the whole communal life of the world. In this sense, process theology can offer "the beauty of a vision of wholeness," which can be the ultimate goal for the liberation movement.⁵⁷ Cobb states, "The reason harmony is so highly prized in process thought is that the basic vision of reality is one in which the conflict of interests is overwhelming."⁵⁸ The process vision of the world eventually includes the wealthy as well as the poor, and it also includes all creatures as well as human beings. Suchocki states, "The justice of God sees to the well-being of all within the context of the well-being of nature. The whole earth is the realm of God's justice." This is a vision of the "indivisible salvation of the whole world."⁵⁹ The *praxis* process theodicy that I have presented aims at the communal *praxis* for wholeness. With the priority of *praxis* to theory, *praxis* process theodicy proposes a nondualistic vision of wholeness.

⁵⁷. Suchocki, "Weaving the World," 76.

⁵⁸. Cobb, "Points of Contact between Process Theology and Liberation Theology in Matters of Faith and Justice," 132.

⁵⁹. Suchocki, "Weaving the World," 78.

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